

Why Diets Don't Work

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“A diet is the penalty we pay for exceeding the feed limit.”

— UNKNOWN

EXCESS WEIGHT IS SO imprisoning that many people take drastic measures to get rid of it. Most of us have tried more diets than we care to admit, in an attempt to lose the extra pounds that keep us from feeling and looking our best. There are tons of weight loss diets, but not all of them are safe, nor will they provide lasting, maintainable, healthy results. The meat diet, the no meat diet, the lemon diet, the quick diet, the super quick quick diet. Everyone wants immediate results, and that may be the reason for the emergence of so many creative diet approaches. Although creative, almost all of them have significant flaws.

Many people apply effort, yet never realize the fruits of their labor, which can be very discouraging. Others experience the sad cycle of yo-yo dieting; losing some weight, but only to gain it back with additional pounds; this cycle is not good for your body or health. Many diets can help dieters be successful temporarily, but who wants the taste of success for seconds? A more permanent solution is needed.

We are a nation that loves easy solutions, but they are not always permanent, satisfying, maintainable, or healthy. Searching for a weight loss solution, many people try one fad diet after another. It is very tempting to be lured in by the promise of big weight loss guaranteed by fad diets; however, there is always a catch. If it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Most fad diets aren't healthy and may cause a series of issues including, but not limited to: bloating, constipation, depression, fatigue, hair loss, hunger, insomnia, intense cravings, nervousness, skin problems, and weak nails.

Most fad diets don't promote significant and lasting weight loss because they are missing basic elements to be successful. Your diet has to do everything. It has to be livable day in and day out; if it is not, you may abandon it like a sinking ship. Too many diets shortsightedly focus on weight loss. It is not enough that your diet helps you lose weight, but it also must be healthy, easily maintainable, satisfying, and flexible to mesh well with your life. If any one of these vital components is missing, your diet may end in disaster. You may initially lose weight, but more than likely the weight is not gone for good, but rather vacationing and waiting to come back with a couple of other pounds.

You can't stop eating just because you're on a diet; well, you can, but it doesn't feel good and it probably won't work. There is only so long your stomach or brain is going to remain hungry before your diet plan is abandoned. The body has plans of its own called survival, which requires food. Eating also keeps your metabolism going. When sustenance is low, there is a greater likelihood that your metabolism will slow. You can't stay on a diet if you're hungry, and you shouldn't expect yourself to.

Being overweight is not just about how much you eat, it is also about what you eat. How many times have you said to yourself "I really haven't eaten that much," but you still don't lose weight? All too often people quickly assess the cause of being overweight is simply attributed to eating too much and lack of exercise. If only it were that easy.

Ninety-nine percent of diets don't help you live in the real world—they try to make you participate in some alternate universe where your meals are turned upside down and inside out for weight loss. And for good reason, they make money off of your dependence. They want you to come back time and time again after you lose your way.

There are so many crazy diets available concocted of a little of this and little of that, which generally makes no sense or does more harm than good—even if you could lose weight by following them, most of them are devoid of the nutrients needed to promote health. There will always be a fad diet that guarantees fast weight loss. Most diets operate basically the same way with a slight twist or a pinch of insanity here and there. Let's explore some of the flaws of popular diets and why they will not work for long or at all.

Commando Diets

Flexible	★	Healthy	★	Maintainable	★	Satisfying	★
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Commando diets promise big rewards if you follow an insanely strict diet. Generally, commando diets focus on losing mega amounts fast. The diet operates under the guise if a rigorous and strict diet is followed then weight loss is bound to occur. To this end, commando diets require strict dieting, which may not provide enough nutrients to maintain a healthy body. Flexibility is MIA with commando diets. As you already know, life happens and you have to adjust and move on to the next challenge. Adhering to a strict and outrageous diet is not feasible for the average person.

Die-hard dieters believe it has to be all or nothing. But this is not true. We all know someone who has lived well, despite a bad habit here and there. And of course when we remind naysayers of this truth, they say, “that is the exception, not the rule.” Well pooh-pooh on them, we all can still learn something from the exception.

Moderation is key; a life devoid of pleasure doesn't seem like much fun, but adding goodness to your diet can balance out the naughty here and there. Commando diets aren't for anyone who enjoys eating a morsel of food. Commando diets will continually leave you hungry and dissatisfied and impatiently waiting for the end of your diet. Commando diets are not easily maintainable because you are so hungry, temptation will be everywhere; there is nowhere that you can hide where food will not be calling your name. You have to be satisfied in order to stick with your weight loss plan.

Counting Calories

Flexible	★★★	Healthy	★★	Maintainable	★★	Satisfying	★★★
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Counting calories scrutinizes calorie consumption to promote weight loss. Basically there are 3,500 calories per pound, which can easily be eaten in one day; but not easily taken off in one day. So how do these pounds add up? Fat has nine calories per gram, while protein and carbohydrates have four calories per gram. Therefore, by eating vegetables and fruits you eliminate hunger and add fiber to your diet while consuming fewer calories. A hundred grams of fatty food will give you 900 calories, while eating the same amount of protein or carbohydrate will give you 400 calories. By choosing healthier options, you actually get to eat more food. Over a year, that can make a big difference in the waistline.

Food	Calories per gram
Protein	4
Carbohydrates	4
Oil	9
Fat	9
Alcohol	7

For example, if a woman utilizes 1,500 calories per day, consumes 1,200 calories per day diet, theoretically, she is eating 300 fewer calories than her body requires. If the woman sticks to the diet, by the end of the week she has lost a whopping two-thirds of a pound. This rate sounds like a slow arduous process, but not really; that is exactly how the weight crept on. A half pound one week, one-third of a pound the next. No one gains 20 pounds overnight, thankfully.

Calorie counting diets can be flexible; however, the challenge is tracking and calculating the caloric content of every morsel of food that enters your mouth throughout the day. Everything counts, from the juice at breakfast, the samples at the grocery store, and the chips you nibbled on.

While knowing the caloric background of food is beneficial, calorie counting can be very tricky; calorie contents may be difficult to determine, especially when eating out and adding sides and condiments. Many restaurants do not readily provide caloric information on their menu items. In addition, there may be errors in the assessment of calories. For instance, a dish may be advertised at 1,000 calories per serving. However, portion sizes may vary, concealing extra calories. The weekend chef may give out 50% more food. Is that a good or bad thing? More food, but more calories. Without a calorimeter it may be impossible to know the amount of calories consumed, and is thereby misleading. Dieters need a more practical way to lose weight.

You can lose weight eating anything if you limit the amount of calories you consume. If your body requires 1,300 calories per day, and you only eat 650 calories of cheesecake—you're losing more than a pound per week, but you're not improving your health. While counting calories may address the caloric content of food, it does not address the nutritional content. Without the proper nutrients, your body may not run optimally or lose weight. Any diet can lead to weight loss, but it is important that it does not damage your health in the process.

Daily calorie consumption recommendations from the USDA are as follows:

- ◆ Seniors—1,600 calories per day
- ◆ Children—1,600 calories per day
- ◆ Inactive women—1,600 calories per day
- ◆ Inactive men—2,200 calories per day
- ◆ Moderately active women—2,200 calories per day
- ◆ Teenage girls—2,200 calories per day
- ◆ Teenage boys—2,800 calories per day
- ◆ Active men—2,800 calories per day
- ◆ Active women—2,800 calories per day
- ◆ Pregnant and lactating women—2,200 to 2,800 calories per day

According to National Institutes of Health, to lose weight women should consume less than 1,200 calories, and men should consume less than 1,600 calories. While specific daily calorie recommendations may be accurate for some people, the recommendations do not take into account build, height, weight, or all of the variables that can have a significant effect on calorie usage. Metabolisms vary from person to person each day. Everyone is different; the amount of calories a body requires each day to do basic activities varies depending on a multitude of factors.

Precise measurement of all meals is not feasible or necessary; however, food consumption should fall into the following range:

- ◆ Protein—2 to 10%
- ◆ Saturated fats—10% or less
- ◆ Mono and polyunsaturated fat—15 to 20%
- ◆ Carbohydrates (including fiber) — 60 to 70% of calories

Depending on how many calories you are allotting yourself, this can look different. Calorie requirements differ depending on age, gender, hormones, level of activity, and metabolism.

Lower-calorie diets

	1,000	1,250	1,500
Saturated fats	100	1250	150
Mono & polyunsaturated fats	150–200	200–260	225–300
Carbohydrates (+ fiber)	600–700	750–875	900–1,050
Protein	20–100	25–125	30–150

Higher-calorie diets

	1,750	2,000	2,250
Saturated fats	175	200	225
Mono & Polyunsaturated fats	263–350	300–400	338–450
Carbohydrates (+ fiber)	1,050–1,225	1,200–1,400	1,350–1,575
Protein	35–175	40–200	45–225

There are basically three main types of food groups known as carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. These three groups can be further dichotomized into healthy and unhealthy groups, whereas if you only ate food out of the unhealthy groups, you may feel satisfied, but weight loss may not happen and you may experience an increased risk of illness.

While more in-depth information will be provided ahead, basically all fat is not completely bad. Saturated fat is unhealthy while unsaturated fat is better. Straight from the ground fruits and vegetables are infinitely healthier than refined and processed carbohydrates, yet both are carbohydrates. While meat is not the only source of protein, it is a complete source. Plant products provide protein and so many more beneficial nutrients.

Dieting should not be as hard as algebra with computations of calories; it should be painless and effortless to maintain. The best diet is flexible and promotes good health. Don't worry about counting calories. If you eat the right food, generally you can eat as much as you like while losing weight and avoiding the torturous pain of an empty stomach.

Diet Pills

Flexible	★	Healthy	★	Maintainable	★	Satisfying	★
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There are a series of weight loss drugs and medications that are available to suppress appetite, reduce fat absorption, increase metabolism, and induce bowel movements; however, the results are less than stellar for the risks involved. Not to mention, none of the weight loss drugs enhance weight loss after they are discontinued. Permanent and significant weight loss generally will not occur from popping pills. Achieving weight loss may be especially difficult without a good diet and exercise. Some diet pills require a particular diet while other diet pills allow dieters to feast on anything. Diet pills may offer a fair amount of flexibility for food selections; however, eating healthier food selections may enhance your results.

OTC weight loss pills come with a barrel of side effects like diarrhea, elevated blood pressure, elevated heart rate, nervousness, tremors, and even heart failure. OTC weight loss pills may result in serious health complications including, but not limited to: anxiety, cardiac complications, depression, headaches, high blood pressure, psychosis, and mental and physical addiction.

In addition to all of the hazards that come with diet pills, they have additional dangers. Diet pills have been in play since the 1950s. Back then patients were prescribed amphetamines, which is basically speed. Some of the other drugs promising better bods were Fenfluramine (Pondimin), dexfenfluramine (Redux), a phentermine, and later a combination of phentermine and Fenfluramine. All of these drugs had the approval of the FDA, but were later removed from the market after reports of serious health complications. The FDA approves weight loss medications, only to find out months, even years later that they are unsafe and may have devastating consequences. Ephedra supplements caused hundreds of negative reactions including dizziness, heart