

Diets: The Good, The Bad, & The Ugly

It's that time of year when many of us are making new years resolutions and one very common resolution is to lose weight.

Q. Tell us a little more about the many different types of diets that are popular today.

When we think about many of these fad diets, I like to break them down into 4 main categories:

- 1.** Diets that have the individual rely on a pill, foods, formula or shake. These types of diets do not center around proper nutrition but instead around taking a certain product. Commonly once the person stops taking the certain product they usually gain the weight back. Therefore the diet works as long as you take their product, and is not sustainable. It can also be expensive and inconvenient. *Examples include: Herbal Magic and Sure Slim.*
- 2.** Diets that focus only ingesting certain foods. Like the previous category these diets do not focus on proper nutrition but instead on the exclusion of certain foods or macronutrients. Long-term these diets can cause negative unfounded believes with the excluded foods like bread, pasta, and carbohydrates. Another point is that these diets are not sustainable long-term and usually end in binge-eating, which can cause weight gain. *Examples include: The Cabbage Soup Diet, Raw food diets, the Zone Diet and Atkins.*
- 3.** Detox Diets, which are a relatively new type but are quickly gaining in popularity. These diets range from only eating certain foods while taking laxatives, herbs, or fiber supplements, to no solid food, to colonoscopies. There are many possible downfalls to these diets such as vitamin deficiencies, muscle breakdown, blood sugar problems, and others.
- 4.** Diets that are very low in calories. These types of diets typically cause an individual to lose large amounts of weight initially but are often not sustainable. The other problem with these diets is that they can cause the metabolism to significantly decrease, which can become a long-term problem. *Examples include: the Dr. Bernstein Diet.*



The common thread in all of these diets is that they do not focus on long-term healthy eating practices. Most of these diets are more of a “quick fix” instead of a lifestyle change. The bottom line is that diets are not healthy and that it is very rare for someone to maintain their weight loss once they stop a diet, because they haven’t made any long-term lifestyle changes.

Q. There are many diet companies that have been around for years, why do you think that they are still around?

Many of these diet companies have been around but are constantly changing, adding new formulations or products. Most of them rely on repeat customers, who may have had previous success but still need to follow the diet to sustain their weight loss or to lose any weight that they’ve gained back while off the diet. These types of diets usually don’t work, if they did than the company would only need to see that client once.

An important point to remember is that 'no one diet fits all', everyone has individual dietary needs and therefore needs an individual/customized diet. This kind of approach is one that we use at Dani Health & Nutrition Services to develop our personalized meal plans. Our approach is centered around the person and their health goals instead using a “cookie-cutter” approach.

Q. What are some practical suggestions that we can implement right now in our daily diet to help us lose weight?

Some healthy living tips that you use to help jump start your healthy living practices are to:

1. Keep a food journal. This helps to bring awareness to what and how much you're actually eating. This will also help you to determine if your diet lacks variety and balance.
2. Reduce your portion sizes by 1/4-1/3
3. Eat every 2-4 hours so you don't overeat, control blood sugars, increase metabolism, etc
4. Aim to fill up on lower-calorie/high nutrient foods such as fruits, vegetables, and high-fibre grains
5. Maintain proper hydration. Think about drinking 1mL of fluid for every calorie that you take in to ensure that you are drinking enough water.