



**...back to a size 16.  
Thanks fad diet!"**

over the long term  
**FAD DIETS  
WON'T WORK**

### Feeling good about yourself

Being healthy includes feeling good about yourself. Don't buy into the unrealistic images portrayed in the media.

At times there are pressures, on top of work and family, that make it harder to maintain a healthy lifestyle, but adopting balanced eating habits can help you feel better about yourself.

Fad dieting is one pressure you don't need in your life.

Healthy food and physical activity will undoubtedly give you more get-up-and-go and leave you feeling healthier. Furthermore, it will enable you to set a good example for your children, and look after your family, by offering them healthy food.

Once a wide range of nutritious foods and physical activity become an everyday routine, the mere idea of dieting will start to seem strange.

If you have any questions, or want to know more about being healthier and more active, visit your local doctor or call the APD Hotline on 1800 812942 to find an accredited practising dietitian (APD) near you.

**Visit [goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://goforyourlife.vic.gov.au) or call 1300 73 98 99 for some great tips and ideas about balanced eating habits.**

1. National Health and Medical Research Council. 2003. Food for Health: Dietary Guidelines for Australian Adults. A guide to healthy eating. <http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/nhome.htm>

2. Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. 1999. National physical guidelines for Australians. Canberra. <http://www.health.gov.au/pubhlth/publicat/document/physguide.pdf>

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**"I went from a size 14  
to a size 12..."**



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## Lose weight the right way

We all want a way to lose weight fast. And right now there's no shortage of supposed solutions. These days it's hard to open a magazine without reading about the next miracle cure.

But you've got to ask yourself, if these diets are so effective, why are there so many new ones? Shouldn't one do the trick?

They are known as 'fad diets.' They may provide short term results but are difficult to sustain and ultimately they deprive you of the essential nutrients only balanced eating can offer.

## So how do you spot a fad diet?

Typically a fad diet shares some or all of the following characteristics:

- promises a quick fix
- promotes 'magic' foods or combinations of foods
- implies that food can change body chemistry
- excludes or severely restricts food groups or nutrients, such as carbohydrates
- has rigid rules that focus on weight loss
- makes claims based on a single study or testimonials only.

Of course, some medical conditions do require special eating plans and in these instances any recommendations from your doctor should be followed.

## Why are fad diets a problem?

By cutting out key foods, fad diets have been known to cause the following symptoms:

- dehydration
- weakness and fatigue
- nausea and headaches
- constipation
- inadequate vitamin and mineral intake.

Fad diets that severely restrict food groups or nutrients may also be omitting the protective health effects that a balanced eating plan provides. It is not known whether fad diets are safe over the long term and whether they lead to an increased risk of various diseases.

## So what's the answer?

There is an eating plan that gets results. It will allow you to achieve a healthy body weight and maintain it over time. It will boost your vitality and improve your sense of self-worth. Best of all you don't have to cut out any foods, because you can eat everything, in moderation.

It's called a balanced eating plan, and it's really nothing new. But combined with moderate physical activity it will change your life in a way that fad diets only dream of.

You might have heard it all before but let's refresh your memory. With a balanced eating plan<sup>1</sup>, it's what you leave in that makes all the difference.

For a balanced eating plan to be successful you need to:

- eat plenty of vegetables, legumes and fruits
- eat plenty of cereals (including breads, rice, pasta and noodles), preferably wholegrain
- include lean meat, fish, poultry and/or alternatives
- include milks, yoghurts, cheeses and/or alternatives. Reduced fat varieties should be chosen, where possible.

Drink plenty of water and take care to:

- limit saturated fat and moderate total fat intake
- choose foods low in salt
- limit your alcohol intake if you choose to drink
- consume only moderate amounts of sugars and foods containing added sugars.

## Meeting your body's needs

A stable body weight means that the amount of kilojoules from food matches the kilojoules used by the body. If your weight is increasing, this may mean that you are eating too much food, doing too little physical activity, or both.

Different food components contain different levels of kilojoules. Fat is the most concentrated source containing 37 kilojoules per gram, whereas protein contains 17 kilojoules and carbohydrates 16 kilojoules per gram. Alcohol also contains energy, at 29 kilojoules per gram.

## What are carbohydrate foods?

We have all heard of them but what are they and why are they important? Carbohydrates provide the body with kilojoules or fuel. Foods that contain the most carbohydrates include grains, bread, breakfast cereal, rice, pasta, noodles, fruit, potato, corn, dried beans, lentils, milk and yoghurt. These foods are rich in vitamins and minerals and are generally low in fat, making them well suited to a healthy eating plan. Some are excellent sources of dietary fibre.

Foods with lots of added sugar (such as soft drinks and sweets) are another source of carbohydrates, but these contribute extra kilojoules with few vitamins and minerals.

## What is protein?

Protein is an essential nutrient needed throughout life to make, maintain and renew all our body tissue and cells. Protein can be found in both animal and plant based foods. Protein-containing foods from animals are meat, chicken, fish, eggs and dairy products.

Protein-containing foods from plants are tofu, nuts, seeds, lentils, dried beans and peas and soy milk.

## What is fat?

We need to eat some fat; however choose foods with the healthiest type of fat. Many Australians eat more fat than they need which can lead to weight gain and heart disease.

Healthier fat, otherwise known as unsaturated fats, can be found in sunflower oil, safflower oil, peanut and olive oils, poly- and monounsaturated margarine spreads, nuts, seeds and avocado. These are much better for you than the saturated fat found in butter, cream, fatty meats, sausages, biscuits, cakes and fried foods.

## Be active every day

Once you start to have healthy eating patterns, you'll soon feel increased levels of vigor, and being active will start to feel not only possible, but also desirable.

To make it easier for you to get the right amount of physical activity each day, here are a few suggestions:

- think of movement as an opportunity, not an inconvenience
- put together at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, preferably all, days
- if you can, also enjoy some regular, vigorous exercise for extra health and fitness.

And remember, the more activity you do, the greater the benefits you'll enjoy.

## A healthy lifestyle- easier than you think

Changing your eating and physical activity habits can be difficult to begin with. But once you've got the ball rolling, it's easy to sustain. Here are a few tips to help ease the transition:

- For best results, combine an active lifestyle with healthy eating
- Make small, achievable, life-long changes to your lifestyle and eating habits
- Fill up on low-kilojoule, nutritious foods
- Keep portions moderate in size
- Eat until you have had enough – not until you are full
- Do your best to avoid eating when you are not hungry
- Recognise that on some days you might be hungrier than on other days
- Eat slowly and enjoy your food
- Eat regular meals including breakfast, lunch and dinner
- Reduce the amount of 'extra' or 'sometimes' foods you eat. Examples of 'sometimes' foods include biscuits, cakes, desserts, pastries, soft drinks; high fat snack items such as crisps, pies, pasties, sausage rolls and other takeaways; lollies and chocolate.