

RED FLAGS: SPOTTING FAD DIETS

Diets are often marketed as the answer to people's problems, promising quick weight loss, physical health and beauty. The dieting industry is a multi-billion dollar industry that succeeds by making people feel bad about themselves. People quickly become stuck in a vicious cycle of dieting (and the dieting companies make even more money!). Fad diets are most often ineffective and can be harmful to your health.

IDENTIFYING FAD DIET RED FLAGS:

- **Sounds Too Good To Be True:** if it were that easy for everyone to lose weight, no one would be overweight, right? → the key to sustainable weight loss is small, manageable lifestyle changes.
- **Promises Fast Results:** such as weight loss of more than 2 pounds (1 kg) per week → drastic weight loss is not healthy, and you will most likely end up gaining the weight back as soon as you go off the diet. Dramatic weight loss causes the metabolism to slow as the body perceives it to be a threat to survival.
- **Limited to No Exercise Component:** nutrition and physical activity are the two key components of any weight-management plan → ignoring one will not lead to lasting results.
- **Eliminates Specific Foods & Entire Food Groups:** all foods/ food groups offer healthful, nutritious options → unless you have a medical need to limit a certain food group, there is no reason to banish an entire food group from your diet.
- **Restricts Calorie Intake Drastically:** you are likely to see weight loss when you suddenly eat less calories. Restricting calorie intake too low (~ 1600-1800 or lower) causes your body to enter into starvation mode. In this mode, your cognitive and physical processes are hindered and your metabolism slows → this makes achieving a healthy weight much more difficult in the future and increases the likelihood of overeating and weight gain.
- **Labels Foods as "Good" and "Bad":** the only "bad" foods out there are ones that are spoiled or will make you physically ill if you eat them → there are foods that are more nutrient-dense than others, but restricting certain foods and labeling them as "bad" can lead to cravings, overeating and an unhealthy relationship with food.
- **Does Not Provide Support for Long-Term Success:** a healthy weight is achieved by a healthy lifestyle, not a temporary diet/ exercise regime → engaging in a temporary weight loss program only to return to habits that don't support a healthy weight, will lead to weight gain and increased difficulty with achieving a healthier weight in the future.
- **Promotes Specific Food Combinations:** there is no evidence that combining certain foods or eating foods at specific times of day will help with weight loss → eating the "wrong" combinations of food doesn't cause them to turn to fat immediately or to produce toxins in your intestines, as some plans claim.
- **Implies that Body Chemistry can be Changed with Food:** your metabolism and bodily processes are incredibly complex → if eating a few foods could alter everything, our bodies would not function at all as subsequent processes would be affected.

- **Expensive “Miracle” Products:** don’t buy into gimmicks → there is no magic diet pill, meal replacement smoothie, or elixir that will exclusively make you keep weight off. These products often lack scientific evidence and are not proven to be effective.
- **Very Rigid:** eating in a way that prevents you from enjoying food and social situations is not healthy → if a diet has you obsessing about food rules and is taking up a lot of mental space/ effort this is a huge problem. Diets often perpetuate and encourage disordered eating behaviours that can lead to clinical eating disorders.
- **Based on Anecdotal Evidence/ Before-and-After Photos:** ads that rely solely on weight loss photos to sell their product likely do not have real science to back their claims → a successful diet plan is one that is extensively studied and supported by sound, reliable research by credible professionals.
- **Promoted by Celebrities, Individuals with Limited/No Sound Nutrition Credentials and/or Salespeople:** these endorsers get paid to advertise and sell you the diet. Holistic Nutritionists, Nutritionists, Personal Trainers, Weight Loss Coaches, Allied Health Practitioners whose main discipline is not Nutrition etc., do not possess the necessary education, licensing credentials and/or regulation to provide nutrition advice.
- **Forces you to Buy the Company’s Foods or Supplements:** using diet products instead of real food puts more money into the dieting industry and takes you further away from developing a healthy relationship with food.
- **Based on a Single Study or Misrepresented Scientific Studies:** just because a singular study concluded merit to a certain diet, does not mean it is so in every case. It is important to cross-check multiple studies, since scientific studies may be misrepresented by the media. → It is important to examine all claims critically. Consult a dietitian to help you if you are unsure.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- Why do I need a diet if others do not?
- If diets work so well, why are there so many of them?
- What was the longest period of time you sustained weight loss from dieting?
- What trend do you see with your body weight, shape and size since trying different diets?
- How much time and money have you invested into dieting?
- How has dieting interfered with your life (physical, social, psychological, behavioural etc.)?

**DID YOU KNOW? DIET REGIMES AND WEIGHT LOSS PROGRAMS ARE NOT REGULATED IN CANADA.
THIS MEANS ANYONE CAN PROMOTE JUST ABOUT ANYTHING AND MAKE MONEY!**

Sources:

- Nutrition Therapy & Pathophysiology 3rdE,
- Dietitians of Canada/ Unlock Food.ca
- Green Mountain at Fox Run Women’s Centre for Binge & Emotional Eating
- Centre for Clinical Interventions

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Hi, we are Syd & Britt!

Outpatient Registered Dietitians working in Ontario, Canada.

We are on a mission to help our clients reconnect with their bodies, rediscover their nutritional nature and grow into the best version of themselves!

In our work, we were spending copious amounts of time looking for comprehensive resources that illustrated key nutrition concepts for a variety of nutrition topics. We took it upon ourselves to create resources that were user-friendly and covered the necessary concepts to help our clients succeed. Our store features a mix-bag of resources for a variety of conditions that a private practice RD is likely to see. Save yourself time and money, let us do the work!

FREE RESOURCES

- [Fueling 101: Pre-Workout Nutrition](#)
- [Smart Sipping for Enjoyment & Health](#)
- [Red Flags: Spotting Fad Diets](#)

PREMIUM RESOURCES

- [Ultimate Meal & Snack Package](#)
- [Heart Health Client Education Package](#)
- [An Intuitive Eating Approach to Portion Sizes](#)

[View the full resource store!](#)