

Is it all too good to be true?

What does it all mean?

Celebrity and popular fad diets that promise fast and drastic weight loss results through liquid meals, detox or eliminating whole food groups should be avoided. Some fad diets even recommend no exercise which demonstrates the lack of fuel these diets provide for everyday activity let alone a high training load.

Fad diets seem appealing because they promise fast results through a quick fix for something that may ordinarily require a lot of time and effort. Often the nature of fad diets does not promote an eating pattern which is sustainable in the long term. The weight may come off with will power and dedication in the short term, but if situations change without modifying lifestyle, and past habits creep back, the weight lost will go back on, and often more weight is regained than before the diet started.

Low carb diets

Atkins and the Zone diet were the pioneers in low carb/high protein diets. The popularity of these diets was largely due to the rapid weight loss seen in the first few weeks. Impressive short term results on the scales are predominately from a reduction in fluid as each gram of carbohydrate stores retains 3 to 4 grams of fluid. This rate of weight loss is not maintained and studies have shown that after 12 months the weight loss results from low carb diets are no different than those achieved on a sensible reduced kilojoule eating plan.

Low carb diets restrict important high nutrient food including wholegrains, fibre, fruit and starchy vegetables. This also restricts the primary fuel source for the body and brain, and for an athlete even more important for training to see strength and performance gains. Very low carb diets can have side effects such as headache, fatigue, mood swings, poor concentration and focus, bad breath, dehydration, very low energy levels and constipation.

Mixed messages

More of this, less of that - do all the diets seem like one big contradiction?

Trying to combine all the diet messages can have you going around in circles and struggling to see results.

There are a number of reasons different diets might seem to work but ultimately they come down to the basics that you have to have a healthy, modified balanced diet.

Diets that advise cutting out food groups or certain types of food just reduce the range of food to choose from when its time to eat, which means you are likely to eat less.

Low carb diets will also reduce high sugar carbohydrate foods like biscuits, cakes and take-aways which in turn also limits a high level of fat intake from these foods so it may not be just cutting out carbs but a reduction in total kilojoules which further contributes to more success of a reduction in kilojoules and weight.

Try this

Instead of cutting out certain types or groups of food when trying to lose weight, portion sizes of all foods should be reduced. Meals should have balanced ratios and smaller portions of both carbohydrate and lean protein with limited additional fats and an increase in non starchy vegetables for weight loss. The kilojoule amount of protein is 17kJ/g and carbohydrates provide 16kJ/g, if you have twice as much protein as carbs the total kilojoule amount would be the same as if you had a balanced amount of both. Further to this the body is more satisfied that it has received all the major nutrients it needs and doesn't send out as many hunger pains to ask for more food.

Read the fine print, there really is no magic pill. Most weight loss product still promote – “in conjunction with a balanced diet, limited take-aways and alcohol and regular exercise.”