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 at high training load.

Fad diets can 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. Initial weight loss may happen in the short term, largely from muscle and fluid which will slow down metabolism. Without modifying lifestyle and past eating behaviours add to this a slower metabolism and weight can creep back on.

Is it sustainable? With any new eating habits you want to find a happy medium between targeting a few key areas to modify and managing life. A diet shouldn’t control you or your actions so if you are eating in a way you find is unnatural or doesn’t match your social surrounds and you are changing your behavior or circumstances to suit your diet it may not be the best diet plan to suit your needs. Food habits should support your training, make you feel healthy, energetic and be easy to manage because you enjoy it and can see the benefits from doing it, not because you feel it’s what you should do.

Mixed messages and negative messages A lot of diets contradict each other in what you should be doing. Trying to combine all the diet messages can have you going around in circles and struggling to see any results. Just because a way of eating suited one person, it doesn’t mean it’s right for everyone! If you are eating something that you are supposed to ‘ban’ ‘cut out’ or ‘eliminate’ it doesn’t mean you have a bad diet or you are unhealthy. Their success can come from the fact there is just less food to choose from. There are a number of reasons different diets might seem to work over others but ultimately they come down to eating less and moving more and consider the basics to have a healthy, balanced diet.

Low carb diets Atkins and the Zone diet were the pioneers in low carb/high protein diets. Now its being revisited through the high fat low carb diet for weight loss. Turning the common concepts of dieting on its head, the popularity of these diets is largely due to the potential 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. It also restricts the preferred fuel source for the body and brain, and for pushing yourself in training. 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, all of which will
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have an impact on performance. Instead of cutting carbs out completely consider modifying intake to suit training times and if need be reduce when activity isn’t as high.

**Consider this first** With any sort of change, you have to want to change and have good reason to. If that’s not there no diet or behavior modification will be successful, if diets aren’t working perhaps revisit why you really wanted to go on the diet in the first place to see if that’s matching up with what you are doing.

Don’t forget the basics, do them well and consistently and there will be a greater chance of long term modifications and success. Instead of cutting out certain types of food, control portion sizes and have meals with balanced ratios of both high fibre carbohydrate and lean protein with some good fats and an increase in non starchy vegetables. That way you cover all the major nutrients the body needs to be healthy and satisfied.

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 exercise regularly.”