

Dieting Fact or Fiction?

Can you detect dieting fact from fiction? Take the quiz below to test your weight-loss smarts. Then check out the answers on the other side — you might be surprised at what you discover!

Fact or Fiction? (see reverse for answers)

- 1** To lose weight, you should cut out dairy products such as milk, yogurt and cheese because they're fattening.
- 2** If you lose weight on a high-protein, low-carbohydrate diet, it's just because you're eating fewer calories.
- 3** It's OK to eat all you want of low-fat foods because they're so low in calories.
- 4** Health experts recommend losing weight at a rate of 1 - 2 pounds per week.
- 5** Skipping breakfast is a good way to cut calories.

On the lookout for a reliable weight loss plan?

Steer clear when you spot these signs.

So many weight-loss plans and products sound appealing — how can you tell a safe and reliable method from one that will lighten only your pocketbook? You're better off steering clear when you spot these signs:

- **Goes against common sense.** A plan that claims you can lose weight without cutting calories or exercising is pulling your leg.
- **Promises incredible results.** Get-thin-quick schemes that guarantee you can "lose 30 pounds in 30 days" seldom deliver and may endanger your health. Also beware of dramatic language such as "breakthrough" or "miracle diet."
- **Plays the blame game.** Programs that blame a particular food or food group for weight gain without regard to calories are flying in the face of good science.
- **Uses testimonials to tout success.** Quoting a few "satisfied users" is no substitute for reliable weight-loss methods based on scientific research.
- **Masks a sales pitch.** Be suspicious of programs that require you to invest in expensive special foods, supplements or gadgets.
- **Bashes reputable advice or claims that respected groups are "against them."** Remember, weight loss advice from reputable organizations such as the American Dietetic Association or American Heart Association is based on years of sound scientific research.

1

Fiction

FACT: Research shows that getting enough dairy calcium seems to trigger the body to burn more fat, particularly fat around the waistline. To reap the benefits, shoot for three to four daily servings of milk, yogurt and cheese as part of your reduced-calorie eating plan.

In addition, the notion that dairy products are “fattening” is pure fiction. There are a wide variety of calorie-trimmed options that easily fit into a weight loss plan. For example, an ounce of reduced-fat cheddar cheese contains 80 calories; a cup of fat-free milk contains 90 calories, and a cup of plain low-fat yogurt contains 140 calories.

2

Fact

FACT: Fans of high-protein, low-carbohydrate diets operate under the false premise that the carbohydrates in foods such as bread, cereal, rice, pasta, fruits and vegetables cause the body to store fat. Cutting out carbohydrates and loading up on high-protein (and often high-fat) foods is said to stop this process and lead to weight loss. In reality, there’s only one sure-fire way to lose weight: eat fewer calories than you burn off. In the first few days of following a high-protein diet, your body sheds some water weight and muscle in response to being carbohydrate-deprived. After that, any weight is the result of eating fewer calories.

It’s simply not true that carbohydrates — or any other nutrient — cause your body to store fat. In fact, research shows that people who are most successful at losing weight and keeping it off follow an eating plan that’s high in carbohydrates and low in fat. So, to win the weight loss game, don’t skimp on whole grains, fruits and vegetables, or low-fat dairy foods.

3

Fiction

FACT: It’s tempting to fill up on fat-free treats such as cookies, cakes and ice cream. But before you do, let’s make one thing perfectly clear: “low-fat” or “fat-free” does not mean “low-calorie” or “calorie-free”! In fact, some low-fat products contain as many or more calories as their full-fat counterparts. Even when a low-fat product is lower in calories, eating extra-generous servings can put your daily calorie limit over the top. Be smart about choosing low-fat products — check the Nutrition Facts label for the serving size and number of calories it contains. Then figure that amount into your calorie budget.

4

Fact

FACT: Miracle diets that promise quick weight loss sound heavenly, but seldom deliver lasting results. Losing weight too quickly also may increase your risk for health problems such as gallstones.

Health experts recommend losing at a safe and realistic pace of 1-2 pounds per week. This translates into a “calorie deficit” of 500 to 1,000 calories per day, which you can achieve through a combination of eating less and being more physically active. Losing even ½ pound per week is a worthy goal. Just think, at that rate, you could weigh about 25 pounds less in a year! Losing even modest amounts of weight — say 10 or 20 pounds — reduces your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes.

5

Fiction

FACT: Skipping breakfast is a popular calorie-cutting strategy among some dieters, but one that usually backfires. When you skip breakfast, you may not burn as many calories during the morning because digesting food helps “wake up” your metabolism after a long night’s rest. Forgoing your morning meal may find you overeating later in the day when hunger pangs get the best of you. In addition, research shows that people who succeed at losing weight and keeping it off almost always eat breakfast. Besides, skipping breakfast may shortchange you on getting enough important nutrients such as vitamin C, calcium and fiber. Fast and easy ways to “break your fast” include a bowl of whole grain cereal with low-fat milk and fruit, peanut butter-topped whole-wheat toast and a glass of OJ, or a carton of yogurt and a handful of grapes.