

# Weekly Wellness

OCHE – HEALTH  
PROMOTIONS

WEEK ONE

FEBRUARY 2016

## MONTHLY OVERVIEW

### It's Fad Diet February!

Debunking the  
common  
misconceptions  
presented by the  
media on fad  
diets and  
supplements

#### Week 1:

- What's up with fad diets?

#### Week 2:

- What about weight-loss supplements?

#### Week 3:

- Should I try meal replacements?

#### Week 4:

- Do I really need to take vitamins?

## Fad Diet February

- The novelty of the new year is still upon us, as is the flood of diet advertisements that promise amazing results in just a few short weeks.
- The problem is, most of these diets don't work, or if they do, they don't have lasting effects.
- Why is this?
  - Many of these diets are too restrictive to maintain for any length of time
  - They don't focus on changing your overall eating habits
  - They are viewed as quick fixes and temporary eating patterns

## Fad Diet Examples

### The Paleo Diet

**What is it?** Also known as “the Caveman Diet”, involves the consumption of meat, poultry, fish, vegetables, and fruits; excludes beans, legumes, grains, processed foods, etc.

**Pros?** The paleo diet encourages the participant to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, and limit processed junk foods and sugar.

**Cons?** Vitamin and mineral deficiencies can develop due to the elimination of grains, legumes, and beans - such as folic acid and B vitamins. A high intake of fatty meats (like bacon, a Paleo favorite) may lead to a diet high in saturated fat.



### The Gluten Free Diet



**What is it?** A diet originally used to treat celiac disease that has gone mainstream. This diet eliminates all foods with gluten, a protein found in wheat. It promises weight loss and improved health with little evidence to back it up

**Pros?** With the elimination of gluten comes increase consumption of unprocessed foods and a decreased carbohydrate intake.

**Cons?** Gluten-free is not synonymous with “healthy”, many gluten-free products are just as bad as their gluten-containing counterparts. It's also expensive. Bottom line - if you don't have Celiac disease, you probably do not need to eat gluten free.

### Juice Cleanses/Fasts

**What is it?** Participants are told to replace one, if not all meals, with different juices, for varied time periods. Claims it will “detox” your body and jump start your metabolism.

**Pros?** Increases the consumption of fruits and vegetables

**Cons?** With juicing, most of the fiber from the fruits and vegetables is removed, leaving vitamins, minerals, and lots of sugar. It is also a very low calorie diet so your metabolism may in fact slow down. It can be expensive. You are not getting a balanced diet. Your body does not need a special detox, the kidneys and liver do that already.



## The Bottom Line?

- If it looks too good to be true it probably is!
- Be wary of any diet that eliminates a food group, unless for medical treatment
- Eat everything in moderation and develop a healthy eating style for life instead!

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a time



# Weight loss supplements

- You see it all over social media and day-time TV... "Take X supplement and never diet again"... the claims are endless. Sound familiar?
- Just like fad diets, they are meant to be quick fixes, and aren't always effective
- They can also be quite dangerous, harming certain internal organs and interacting with prescribed medications, even if they're claimed to be "natural"

## How do they work?

Weight loss supplements claim to work in three different ways

- 1) **Reduce appetite** - so you feel full and therefore eat less
- 2) **Reduce absorption** - generally of carbs or fat, therefore you get fewer calories from the foods you eat
- 3) **Increase fat burning** - so you burn more calories each day, without extra exertion



## Examples of Weight Loss Supplements

### OTC Supplements

- **Garcinia Cambogia** - specifically hydroxycitric acid (HCA), derived from the skin of a small green fruit. Claimed to reduce cravings and appetite. Not shown to be effective and has been shown to cause liver damage.
- **Green coffee bean extract** - more specifically chlorogenic acid. Claims to slow down carb digestion and increase fat burning. May cause GI side effects. Not scientifically proven to be effective.
- **Hydroxycut** - one of the most well known weight loss supplements. There are various products in the line that work in different ways. Contains a proprietary blend of various plant extracts and a high dose of caffeine. This high caffeine dose can cause GI discomfort and anxiety. Not widely studied, therefore can't be proven effective.
- **Alli (Orlistat)** - a pharmaceutical drug now sold OTC. Designed to limit fat absorption. This greatly limits your diet, as undesirable GI side effects occur if you consume fat.

### Prescription Supplements

- **Phentermine** - An amphetamine. Curbs appetite. Not currently deemed safe for long term use. Side effects span from an increase in blood pressure and restlessness to drowsiness, insomnia, or dry mouth. May interact with insulin.
- **Contrave** - combination of naltrexone (treats drug addiction) and bupropion (treats depression, helps with smoking cessation). Can cause GI side effects, dizziness, headache, etc. Has proven to be effective, however if 5% of weight is not lost in first 12 weeks it will not work, according to the FDA.
- **Qsymia** - combination of phentermine (at lower levels) and topiramate (treats migraines/seizures). Curbs appetite. Commonly causes tingling hands and feet, dizziness, change in taste etc. Safe for long term use.

**\*\*These claims aren't always scientifically proven, plus even the prescription pills aren't incredibly effective. You still must eat a healthy balanced diet and exercise.**

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# Meal Replacements

- Meal Replacements are found in many stores and come in many different forms—bars, shakes, powders, smoothies, even pre-portioned meals from various companies
- They are advertised for many different uses such as eating on the go and weight loss
- Examples are: protein powders such as Shakeology<sup>®</sup>, and protein/meal replacement bars such as Power Bars<sup>®</sup> or Clif Bars<sup>®</sup>. Other companies offer a line of products such as Slim-Fast<sup>®</sup> and Advocare<sup>®</sup>. One could even consider Nutrisystem<sup>®</sup> a meal replacement program.

## Weighing the pros and cons

### Pros

- ⇒ They may help you cut back on your calories, if used properly
- ⇒ They may help you avoid eating fast food when on the go
- ⇒ It's better than skipping meals; your metabolism slows down when you do that!
- ⇒ Some are high in protein and/or fiber
- ⇒ Some contain as many micronutrients as a multivitamin (Shakeology<sup>®</sup>)



### Cons

- ⇒ They can be very expensive—most bars or shakes are at least \$2 each and meal replacement programs can cost hundreds of dollars
- ⇒ They don't always have a balance of macro- and micronutrients
- ⇒ They can be very high in sugar
- ⇒ They are not always healthy or practical to use long term
- ⇒ They are generally calorie dense so they may not fill you up
- ⇒ Some are more accessible than others - some are sold in stores, where as others have to be purchased online
- ⇒ Some suck you in to a pyramid scheme where you feel obligated to sell the product yourself

## Are there other, better, alternatives?

- Meal replacements of any kind can be helpful every now and then but they are not recommended for daily, long term use.
- Instead, plan out your day!
  - If you know you will be out and about, pack a lunch bag with healthy snacks such as fruits, vegetables, string cheese, etc so you have healthy options and aren't tempted to stop for a burger and fries
  - Meal planning and batch cooking also helps ensure you have healthy foods for every meal of the day (don't worry, March is all about meal planning)

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# Vitamin Supplements

- Go into any drug or convenience store and you'll see an entire aisle of vitamin supplements...from A to Zinc
- It's also likely you've seen articles, ads, or have heard that a certain vitamin can help with a specific ailment
- But how do you know if the claims are accurate and that a \$20 bottle of multivitamins is worth the money?
- Unfortunately it's difficult to weed through the claims, however the following tips should shed some light on the matter...

## The Good

- If your Doctor states you are exhibiting symptoms of a deficiency, especially if you have the lab results to confirm it, a vitamin supplement can be incredibly helpful
- Taking a multivitamin can help supplement an otherwise healthy diet (consider MyPlate); although it's not necessary



## The Bad

- The bioavailability of the vitamins in supplements is not as great as in food. So although your vitamin says you're getting 100% of the RDA, (recommended daily allowance) you really aren't, because you 're not absorbing it all
- If you take a vitamin on an empty stomach it's likely you'll absorb even less, especially of fat soluble vitamins, which need fat to be readily absorbed
- Many times the claims aren't backed by science, ex: Although Vitamin C and Zinc both act to enhance your immune system they won't stop a cold in it's track and unless you are deficient, B Vitamins will not boost your energy
- Vitamin supplements can be incredibly expensive. Taking multiple supplements every day takes a toll on your bank account

## The Ugly

- Taking too much of certain vitamins and minerals can cause unwanted side effects—ex: excessive intake of vitamin C can cause GI irritation
- Although rare, toxicities can occur from consistently taking unnecessary mega doses of vitamins (a dose many times high than the RDA)

## The Bottom Line:

- A multivitamin or vitamin supplement does not make an unhealthy diet healthy
- The best way to ensure you get all the vitamins and minerals you need is to eat a healthy balanced diet...in other words: **FOOD FIRST!!**