

- Diet

Why you should think twice before dieting

Experts explain why fad diets don't stack up longer term

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Whether you've been on one, have considered trying one out, or had a friend who did, you'll know that diets are tough work. Filled with rules and regulations on what you can eat and when, these regimens often involve unrealistic expectations for quick results that disappear as soon as the diet is done. But why exactly are diets such a no-go?



“The big problem with diets is that most focus on short-term restrictions and goals rather than educating people on creating healthy habits that can help them long term,” nutritionist Bridget Foliaki-Davis says.

“Most diets are looking to help people lose weight fast and extreme calorie restriction or eliminating entire food groups is often the approach.”

This is not at all sustainable in the long term and can actually be quite damaging to the human body.

THE DETRIMENTAL IMPACTS OF A DIET

“For starters, restricting food groups can lead to cravings and overeating,” says Foliaki-Davis, who is also the founder of Bridget’s Health Kitchen.

“This is where yoyo dieting can come into play because often when we restrict ourselves, we get cravings. And if we succumb to those cravings, we often make the most of it by overindulging, followed by a cycle of guilt and remorse.

“This cannot only lead to weight gain, but it can also have an effect on our mental health and relationship with food.”

Then there’s what happens if you get rid of complete food groups.

“By depriving yourself of energy from food groups, which is needed to keep your metabolism firing, your metabolism may slow down to conserve energy, which makes it harder to

lose weight and keep it off,” explains Foliaki-Davis.

“So while people may lose weight fast initially, the body will eventually adapt to the lower energy intake by storing it and not burning it as fast. This leads to weight gain.”

Eliminating food groups can also lead to nutrient deficiencies, which can then lead to issues with your immune system, energy levels and even bone health.

“And as a diet is a temporary fix and not a lifestyle change, many people will find they put the weight back on once they resume their normal eating habits,” the chef adds.

WHY DOESN'T DIETING WORK

Simply put, they're not sustainable. “If you don't teach people how to eat correctly at home and make informed decisions when dining out, they will likely put the weight back on,” Foliaki-Davis says.

“We have touched on metabolism and yoyo dieting but another issue is the social impact. “If someone can't eat out without feeling guilty, it can affect their social life and leave them feeling isolated, which will not motivate them to keep going.”

She adds: “Empowering people to understand how their bodies work is the key to sustainable weight loss. A quick fix that is only sustainable for 6-12 weeks is unlikely to be a longlasting solution.”

HEALTHIER WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR EATING HABITS

1. Meal prep like a pro “Start by learning to plan ahead,” Foliaki-Davis says.

“Having a meal plan that you can follow is a good way to help you build healthy habits.”

2. Give fasting a go

“Intermittent fasting or timerestricted eating is amazing for your gut health and your metabolism, as it is good for your digestive system to have a few hours to completely digest,” the celebrity chef explains, adding that she often follows the 16:8 approach, which involves fasting for 16 hours and only eating during the remaining eight hours each day.

However, before you get started, it is worth talking to your GP to see if this approach is right for you.

3. Eat for your gut

“Speaking of gut health, eating a diet that focuses on your gut health is key for good health and sustainable weight loss,” Foliaki-Davis says. “So eating foods that are rich in pre and probiotics and low in sugar, gluten and dairy is a good approach.”

4. Plate up the rainbow

Make sure there are plenty of different coloured vegies on the menu. “Often the more vibrant and diverse the plate, the more nutrient rich the meal,” explains the nutritionist.

5. Fill up on healthy ingredients

“For most of your meals, sticking to lean protein, lots of plants and healthy fats is a great way to keep you feeling full with healthy ingredients,” Foliaki-Davis says.