



Diabetes
New Zealand

The diet dilemma

With the huge array of diet and weight loss books and what seems like every celebrity in the world reporting on the diet that's worked for them, you may be feeling a tad mystified or even a little cynical. So what really works?

Yo-yo dieting or rapid weight loss followed by weight gain is not good for your body. This loss and gain cycle upsets the body's metabolism and can actually contribute to weight gain over time.

Successful weight management is a life-long commitment to following a healthy lifestyle and means balancing food eaten versus activity and exercise levels. It's not always easy but small changes to add up over time and help you to achieve a weight you can maintain.

How do you spot a fad diet?

A safe and effective diet is based on a wide variety of foods from the four food groups, not just limited to certain foods, and will encourage a balance between diet and exercise. The four food groups are fruit and vegetables; breads and cereals; meat and meat alternatives; and milk and milk products.

Beware if the diet:

- Lacks flexibility and doesn't allow for individual preferences
- Involves supplements and substitutes for real food e.g. powders or pills
- Uses specific foods or restrictions on the time of eating
- Promises large, rapid weight loss
- Has a limited time span
- Doesn't include exercise
- Involves 'magic' ingredients to aid weight loss
- Says you can eat as much as you like and still lose weight
- Offers a 'cure' for disease
- Involves lots of one type of food e.g. ice-cream or beetroot.

Some hints to help you watch your weight

- Set realistic goals including a realistic weight loss target
- Make gradual changes to your eating habits
- Avoid fad diets
- Eat meals at regular times
- Do not skip meals

- Increase your physical activity. Aim for a regular routine, daily is ideal but anything is better than nothing
- Look for opportunities to add walking into your day and take the stairs where possible
- Aim to reduce your weight by 1kg a month. It doesn't sound like much but slow and steady is the key
- Learn the difference between thirst and hunger
- Serve the same meal for the whole family. Cooking separate meals isn't sustainable long term
- Reduce portion sizes, but it can help to bulk up the meal with low energy vegetables such as carrots, cucumber and tomatoes
- Learn what triggers your eating and find alternative activities e.g. go for a walk or phone a friend
- Avoid having foods in your cupboards that will tempt you
- Save high fat foods for special treats
- Choose foods high in fibre e.g. wholemeal breads, fruits and vegetables
- Choose snacks carefully and resist the temptation to snack
- Hide visual clues to eating e.g. the biscuit jar
- Take time over your meals. Eat slowly
- Eat at the table and put your knife and fork down between each mouthful
- Avoid eating standing up e.g. while preparing a meal
- Turn off the TV when eating
- Make an appointment with a dietitian to get individual advice.



A safe and effective diet is based on a wide variety of foods.

Remember it's better to make small permanent changes rather than dramatic ones that you can't maintain. If you have a bad day, just put it aside and start again and get back on track the next day. You CAN do it.