

### Lesson 4: Should we diet?

#### I1: What is a Diet?

A diet refers to what a person eats or drinks during the course of a day. There are many different types of diets. It is much easier to maintain a diet that takes into account the foods that you like and dislike and also include combinations of foods with enough calories and nutrients for good health. It is important to choose an eating plan that you can live with. The plan should also teach you how to select and prepare healthy foods, as well as how to maintain your new weight. Remember that many people tend to regain lost weight. Eating a healthful and nutritious diet to maintain your new weight, combined with regular physical activity, helps to prevent weight regain. The number of calories that is right for you depends on your weight and activity level. The calorie level of your diet should allow for a weight loss of no more than 1 pound per week (after the first week or two when weight loss may be more rapid because of initial water loss). If you can estimate how many calories you eat in a day, you can design a diet plan that will help you lose no more than 1 pound per week. The selected calorie level, however, may not produce the recommended rate of weight loss, and you may need to eat more or less.

A healthy diet should include:

Adequate vitamins and minerals.

Adequate protein.

Adequate carbohydrates

A daily fibre intake of 20 to 30 grams.

No more than 30 percent of calories, on average, from fat per day

At least 8 to 10 glasses of water or water-based beverages, per day. You need more water if you exercise a lot.

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#### I2: The different types of diets

**Fixed-menu diet.** A fixed-menu diet provides a list of all the foods you will eat. It is easy to follow because the foods are selected for you. However, there are very few different food choices which may make the diet boring and hard to follow away from home. Also, it does not teach the food selection skills necessary for keeping weight off.

**Exchange-type diet.** An exchange-type diet is a meal plan with a set number of servings from each of several food groups. Within each group, foods are about equal in calories and can be interchanged as you wish. There is usually a fairly wide variety of foods to select and it is easy to follow the diet away from home. It also teaches the food selection skills need to keep weight off.

**Pre-packaged-meal diet.** These diets require the consumer to buy pre-packaged meals. Such meals may help with the learning of appropriate portion sizes. However, they can be costly and don't necessarily advise on selection or preparation of food.

**Formula diet.** Formula diets are weight-loss plans that replace one or more meals with a liquid formula. Most formula diets are balanced diets containing a mix of protein, carbohydrate, and usually a small amount of fat. Formula diets are usually sold as liquid or a powder to be mixed with liquid. They are easy to use and promote short-term weight loss. However, most people regain the weight as soon as they stop using the formula. Also, they do not advise on how to make healthy food choices, a necessary skill for keeping weight off.

**Questionable diets.** These diets suggest that a certain nutrient, food, or combination of foods should be eaten to promote easy weight loss. Some may work in the short term because they are low in calories. However, they are often not well balanced and may cause nutrient deficiencies. They do not teach eating habits that are important for long-term weight management.

**Flexible diets.** Some programs or books suggest monitoring fat only, calories only, or a combination of the two, with the individual making the choice of both the type and amount of food eaten. This approach works well for many people, and teaches them how to control what they eat. However, some don't consider the total diet and allow people to take in unlimited amounts of excess calories from sugars, and therefore don't lead to weight loss.