



Diet Mania

"Stop dieting, start living!"

"Starting from tomorrow"?

Statistics show that at any given time 50 - 70% of women are dieting. Have you "started from tomorrow" or did you decide that you would "pig out for one last weekend and then start from Monday"? Ladies, ladies ... do you really want to embark on a program of self denial and deprivation, just to fit into that bikini?!

We challenge you . . . no, in fact we DARE you to stop dieting! That's right, stop the yo-yo syndrome of loss and gain! Rather, lose the diets, and gain your quality of living! After all, what are the first three letters of the word **DIET**. Need we say more!

From fads to fatter!

The fact that Britain's are getting FATTER, despite the fact that there is more media exposure to health and wellness, more diets and more diet products on the market must mean one thing. FAD diets are temporary, and they are a "quick fix", but they do not work. Why then, do so many of us embark on these "fiddle faddle" diets? We fall for the media trap. You have all heard this before, but today we would like to remind you. The media can act as a propaganda machine determined to shake your confidence, remind you that you aren't good enough, you haven't made it, and that you simply do not measure up. What a load of bollocks hey! We seem to be losing our sense of self, our God-given individuality and we fall victim to narrow definitions of beauty defined by the media. Sadly it is all about economics! This "beautifying" empire that we live in isn't always interested in your personal likes/dislikes or your individuality and needs. It is simply dependent on your disempowerment and you feeling as if you just have to try every single quick fix gimmick.

Dieting damage

- **Nutrient deficiencies:** Research shows that long term dieting where a food group is removed (i.e. removing carbohydrates, proteins or fats completely from your meal plans) can lead to nutritional deficiencies. Remember each food group provides your body with different nutrients to the other. For example carbohydrates give you fibre and vitamins whereas proteins offer you iron, calcium and/or amino acids. We have found in our practices that when patients remove all carbohydrates from their diet (that is including fruits and vegetables) they end up with severe constipation, which leads to bad breath and even irritable colon symptoms.
- **Poor mental performance/moods:** Your diet has the ability to affect your mental performance and your moods significantly. The link between food and mood is very complex. Mood swings, cravings and reduced mental abilities could be as a result of the food you are (or are not) consuming. Your brain produces a neurotransmitter called serotonin which is vital for assisting your body with sleep, digestion, temperature regulation and mood. To make this serotonin your brain relies strongly on two ingredients: glucose (from carbohydrates, fruits and vegetables) AND an amino acid called tryptophan (from meat/poultry/fish/dairy). If one of these ingredients is missing you cannot make this happy/calming chemical. How many of you can relate to experiencing the following symptoms when following a restrictive diet: insomnia or restless sleep, bloating, heartburn, cravings, hot/cold flushes



- and/or irritability, tearfulness and uncontrolled emotions? There is also a link to long term dieting and depression, especially if you are prone to depressive states already! If your family and friends have recently passed hints that you have become a "hormonal whinge on heat" then this could be because your brain is struggling to make the neurotransmitter serotonin!
- **The scary scale dilemma:** Many diets focus on kilogram loss, and unfortunately we become so obsessed with what the scale dictates that we lose our sense of what is important. Read this carefully and if you have to read it a few times: "THE SCALE LIES". Yes, it is the biggest liar when it comes to your weight. As women, our weight fluctuates during the day with temperature and air pressure changes. Hormones play a role, especially the week before your period where you can gain up to three kilograms of fluid. How often do you jump on the scale and then feel totally devastated because what the scales says has not gone down or even worse it has gone up a few grams?! Does it motivate you? Forget about what the scale says. In fact, throw the darn thing away. Who on earth cares in the slightest what you weigh. Good grief, if we were judged on the reading on the scale then we are honestly a lost cause. Ladies, go by how you feel in your clothes, listen to the health changes you experience (e.g. you feel more energetic, your moods are better, your skin is glowing, etc....). There is major psychology behind frequent weighing yourself as a marker of success. Don't do it!
- **Eat less, gain more weight!** Most diets simply restrict calories/kilojoules. In other words, you eat LESS! Although you will experience weight loss on the scale quite quickly, you will also experience another type of loss, and it isn't fat loss! Following very low calorie/kilojoule diets (e.g. less than 1000 calories or 4200 kilojoules) has been shown to result in the loss of muscle mass. You see, when you eat much less than you used to your body decides that it doesn't have to work so hard, so it finds something in your body to break down that will result in a slowed down metabolism. And you guessed what that something is – MUSCLE. Muscle is a metabolically active tissue, which your body actually cannibalises if you are not giving it enough fuel (food) to function on! And that, ladies, is the simple reason why the scale goes down – muscle is more dense in weight than fat mass. Then the problem comes when you decide to go back to your normal high calorie diet again (because this diet was just too ridiculous to follow anymore and it became a matter of your sanity to have chocolate again) you regain your weight, if not more. Your body had adjusted to eating less, so it had become much lazier in a way, and now you are stuffing it with more than it is used to. All your body can do is use up what it has adjusted to burning and then STORE the rest! Scary stuff hey!
- **Skip breakfast, gain more weight!** If you are skipping breakfast to try lose weight, think again! A research study showed that there were 2 groups of dieters. Each group ate the same quantity and type of food, except one group ate a portion of this in the morning as breakfast and the other group skipped breakfast and ate this portion later in the day. Guess who lost more weight? The group who ate their portion as breakfast lost weight by more than 4 kilograms to the group who didn't eat breakfast. The reason for this is that eating within 2 hours of waking actually stimulates your metabolism after the long fast during the evening. It has been proven that individuals who eat breakfast also do better in memory skills and crave less later in the day! The



- reason you could get hungrier by mid-morning means that your body is actually working again – which is good!
- **Solitary confinement:** As nutritionists, the problem we both have with fad diets is that they leave you so alone! There isn't always support to get you to reach your goals and very often they leave you eating totally differently to the rest of the family where you end up cooking 2 or 3 different meals at a time. Who on earth has time for that these days! Cutting out the foods you enjoy can also lead to feelings of guilt when you give in and have them! Is it worth it?!

Well, now that you have heard the bad news, do not despair! Comfort is on the way. All we are trying to encourage you to do is think twice before spending your time, energy and wallet on fad diets. Rather, make a decision from today that you are going to follow something that fits into YOUR lifestyle, something that you can follow with your family and something where YOU feel in control. Remember "all foods fit". There is no such thing as bad foods, just bad diets.

TIPS to identify nutritional quackery:

- Does the diet exclude an entire food group? (i.e. Not allowed any carbohydrates, proteins or fats)
- Does the diet seem balanced to you? (i.e. Does it sound "too good to be true")
- Will you be able to maintain the diet for the rest of your life? Is it practical?
- Does it encourage exercise? (i.e. if a diet does not encourage exercise, then you need to think twice because exercise is part of healthy living and plays a vital role to weight loss)

Christine Stent Pinha RD(SA) and Celynn Erasmus RD(SA)
info@completenutrition.co.za