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Fitness fad flops

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We see quick weight-loss ads everywhere, but do abdominal busters and cellulite creams really work?

We chat to Weight Watchers magazine Fitness Editor, Martha Lourey-Bird, to find out the fad-busting facts.

Here today, fad tomorrow

If you Google "fitness fads" you're presented with over one million results. From detox diets to spot reducers, we chat to resident Weight Watchers exercise expert, Martha Lourey-Bird to see if there are any facts to the fads.

1. Will crash diets work without exercise?

For fast weight loss, many people opt for detox-based diets that may require little or no exercise. Some even promise a weight loss of up to 2-5kg a week. Martha suggests, "If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is. If you lose weight too quickly, chances are you'll put it back on just as fast."

Martha adds that exercise is an important part of weight loss and needs to be combined with a healthy eating plan. "A weight-loss plan needs to be gradual for long-term success, and most importantly, it has to be one that you can sustain," she adds. Can you imagine vegetable soup three times a day for the rest of your life? Bad news for detox diets!

2. What about weight-loss pills?

You've seen the infomercials of people standing next to jeans 10 sizes to big. Was their weight-loss solution really in the power of swallowing a pill alone? Martha advises, "If you look at most pill guidelines, they will always say, 'combined with regular exercise'."

There's also a lot of research based around the placebo effect. "Perhaps people are more motivated and doing more exercise because they are taking a pill that says it will work", says Martha. To further the bad news, "Diet pills are full of artificial ingredients that can't be good for you long term", says Martha.

3. Will spot reducers (abdominal and thigh machines) make me slim?

"Spot reducers simply don't work. If they did our jaws would shrink through talking", suggests Martha. While spot reducers can help tone the targeted muscle, you won't see substantial fat loss. "You can't turn muscle into fat or vice versa", says Martha. "You need to trim the fat through exercise, healthy eating and weight loss to show the muscle underneath".

Martha has a better alternative to repetitious and expensive machines (that will most likely spend more time under your bed), "You need exercise variety to keep your body on its toes and to keep you interested and motivated", says Martha. Find an exercise you enjoy so you can form positive exercise habits. "Get outside and get moving - it's much cheaper!" says Martha.

4. What about creams, lotions and surgery?

Although cellulite is hereditary and can you can't get rid of it completely, Martha advises, "You can reduce the appearance and surface area by losing weight and toning up muscles".

Instead of smothering cellulite creams over unfavourable areas, "Control your weight and diet rather than spend money on magic potions", says Martha. Cosmetic

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or drastic surgery such as gastric banding should only be considered as an absolute last resort.

Martha Lourey-Bird is the Fitness Editor for Weight Watchers magazine. Visit her website at www.marthaloureybird.com.au.

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