

Lesson 2

Fad Diets and Eating Disorders

VOCABULARY

fad diets
weight cycling
eating disorder
anorexia nervosa
bulimia nervosa
binge eating
disorder

YOU'LL LEARN TO

- Describe the risks of fad diets and other dangerous weight-loss strategies.
- Describe the causes, symptoms, and treatment of eating disorders.
- Provide help to someone with an eating disorder.
- Identify the presence of an eating disorder as a situation requiring assistance from professional health services.



Write the term *diet* in the center of a sheet of paper. Around this term, write five to ten words or phrases that come to mind when you hear the word *diet*.

“Miracle patch lets you lose weight without dieting!” “One pill helps you burn fat and lose pounds!” Are you familiar with promises like these? They often appear in print ads and TV commercials. You may hear them on the radio. Such ads promise quick and easy weight loss. What do they actually deliver?

Risky Weight-Loss Strategies

A number of weight-loss strategies not only fail to produce long-term results but also can cause serious health problems. Part of being a health-literate consumer involves recognizing the potential health risks associated with some weight-loss plans and products.

Fad Diets

If you see an ad like the one shown here, be wary. Such ads are often for **fad diets**, *weight-loss plans that are popular for only a short time*. These diets often are hard to stick with because they limit food variety. The “grapefruit diet” is an example of a food-limiting fad diet. Some fad diets are costly because they require dieters to buy certain products. Fad diets that severely restrict the foods a dieter eats fail to provide the body with the nutrients it needs for health and growth. Any weight lost on fad diets is usually regained.

“I Lost 100 Pounds Easy
Eating My
Favorite Foods!!!”
“This Is The Greatest Diet Ever!”

Users Have
Dropped
Over
2 Million
Pounds!

TRY IT NOW

The advertisement is framed with a dark background and white stars and asterisks. The text is in a bold, sans-serif font.

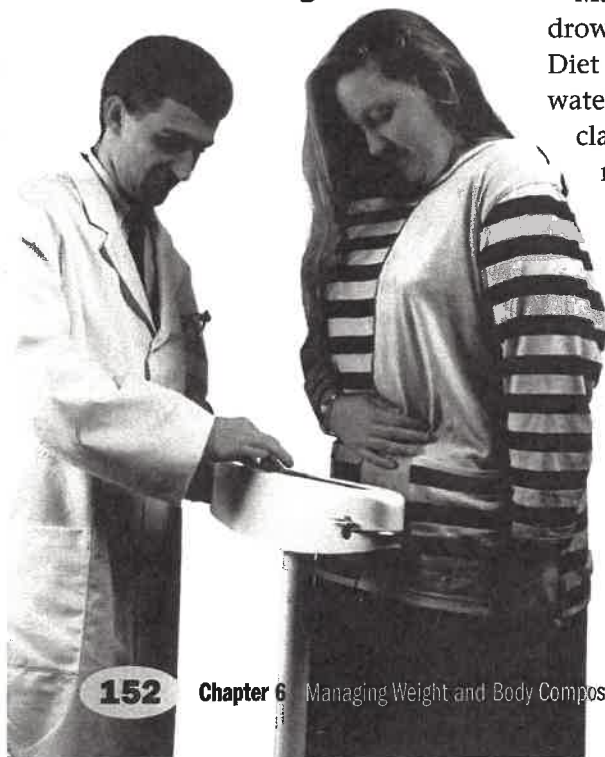
- Ⓐ Fad diets may promise quick and easy weight loss, but any weight lost on these diets is usually regained. *What features does a healthful weight-loss program have?*

Did You Know?

Some weight-loss products contain a substance called *ephedra*. Manufacturers may claim that *ephedra* can suppress appetite, promote weight loss, and increase energy and physical endurance. However, *ephedra* can lead to heart attacks, strokes, or even death.

Always read the labels of products before you buy or use them, and never take a product containing *ephedra*.

Effective weight management involves making healthy lifestyle choices. What steps can a person take to successfully manage his or her weight?



Liquid Diets

A person on a liquid diet replaces all of his or her food intake with a special liquid formula. These very low-calorie diets generally do not meet the body's energy needs. As a result, they often leave the dieter feeling fatigued. Many liquid diets do not provide the body with fiber and needed nutrients. Relying on high-protein, low-carbohydrate liquids as the only source of nutrients can cause serious health problems and even death. Because of the potential dangers associated with liquid diets, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires these products to carry warning labels and recommends that they be used only under close medical supervision.

Fasting

To fast is to abstain from eating. Although this may seem like a sure way to lose weight, fasting for more than short periods deprives your body of needed nutrients and energy. Without a fresh supply of nutrients each day, your body begins breaking down protein stored in muscle tissue for energy. If the person who is fasting also avoids liquids, he or she may become dehydrated.

Some religious and cultural rituals involve brief periods of fasting. Such fasting is not dangerous for the average person because the fast is of limited duration. However, fasting may not be advisable for those with diabetes or other health conditions. If you are unsure about how cultural or religious fasting may affect a medical condition, consult a health care professional for advice.

Diet Pills

Many diet pills work by suppressing appetite. They may cause drowsiness, anxiety, a racing heart, or other serious side effects. Diet pills may also be addictive. Some cause the body to lose more water than normal, which can lead to dehydration. Diet pills may claim to "burn," "block," or "flush" fat from the body, but a low-risk pill that meets these claims has not yet been developed.

Weight Cycling

Some diet plans or products may seem to help people lose weight quickly, but the weight loss is usually from water, not body fat. Water weight loss is quickly regained. *The repeated pattern of loss and regain of body weight* is called **weight cycling**. Weight cycling is common in people who follow fad diets. Some reports have suggested that weight cycling is harmful, although other studies do not support this finding. In general, slow and steady weight loss is the best strategy for long-lasting results.

Fad Diets Harm Health

In a society obsessed by weight and appearance, the promise of quick weight loss is hard to resist. However, fad diets are not only ineffective in producing long-term weight loss, they're also potentially harmful. In this activity you will create a poster advocating against fad diets.

What You'll Need

- poster board
- markers

What You'll Do

1. As a class, brainstorm potentially harmful effects of fad diets.
2. In groups of two or three, come up with a simple concept that conveys the message that fad diets can harm

health. Your concept should be relevant to high school students.

3. Make a poster illustrating your message. Include supporting information about healthful weight-loss strategies in the poster.
4. Ask permission to display your posters at school.

Apply and Conclude


Is your poster persuasive? What advocacy techniques did you use to persuade others? How will your poster have a positive effect on the health of your audience? Why is this an important health issue for teens?

The Risks of Eating Disorders

Sometimes a person's concerns about weight and efforts to lose weight can get out of control. Becoming obsessed with thinness can lead to eating disorders. An **eating disorder** is *an extreme, harmful eating behavior that can cause serious illness or even death*. The exact cause of eating disorders is unknown. They may be brought on by mental or emotional factors such as poor body image, social and family pressures, and perfectionism. Some scientists think that the cause may be partly genetic. Teens with a family history of weight problems, depression, or substance abuse may be more at risk for developing an eating disorder.

About 90 percent of those with eating disorders are female. It's estimated that about one percent of females ages 16 to 18 have this illness. Eating disorders are a serious health problem, and people who suffer from them need professional help.



 People with anorexia often see themselves as overweight even when they are very thin. What type of help does an individual with an eating disorder need?

Anorexia Nervosa

Anorexia nervosa is a disorder in which the irrational fear of becoming obese results in severe weight loss from self-imposed starvation. Anorexia nervosa is a psychological disorder with emotional and physical consequences. The disorder relates to an individual's self-concept and coping abilities. Outside pressures, high expectations, a need to be accepted, and a need to achieve are characteristics associated with the development of anorexia. Medical specialists have also found that genetics and other biological factors may play an equally powerful role in the development of this disorder. Hormones and certain brain chemicals have been shown to trigger the illness in some people.

Anorexia develops most often in teenage girls and young women. Symptoms include extremely low caloric intake, an obsession with exercising, emotional problems, an unnatural interest in food, a distorted body image, and denial of an eating problem.

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF ANOREXIA NERVOSA

Physical consequences of anorexia are related to malnutrition and starvation. A drastic reduction of body fat may cause females with anorexia to stop menstruating. Other consequences include loss of bone density, low body temperature, low blood pressure, slowed metabolism, and reduction in organ size. People with anorexia may develop serious heart problems, including an irregular heartbeat that can lead to cardiac arrest and sudden death.

Treatment for anorexia nervosa may include a stay at a clinic or hospital where the person can receive nutrients to regain weight and strength. Anorexia nervosa also requires psychological treatment to address the problems that lead to the disorder.

Bulimia Nervosa

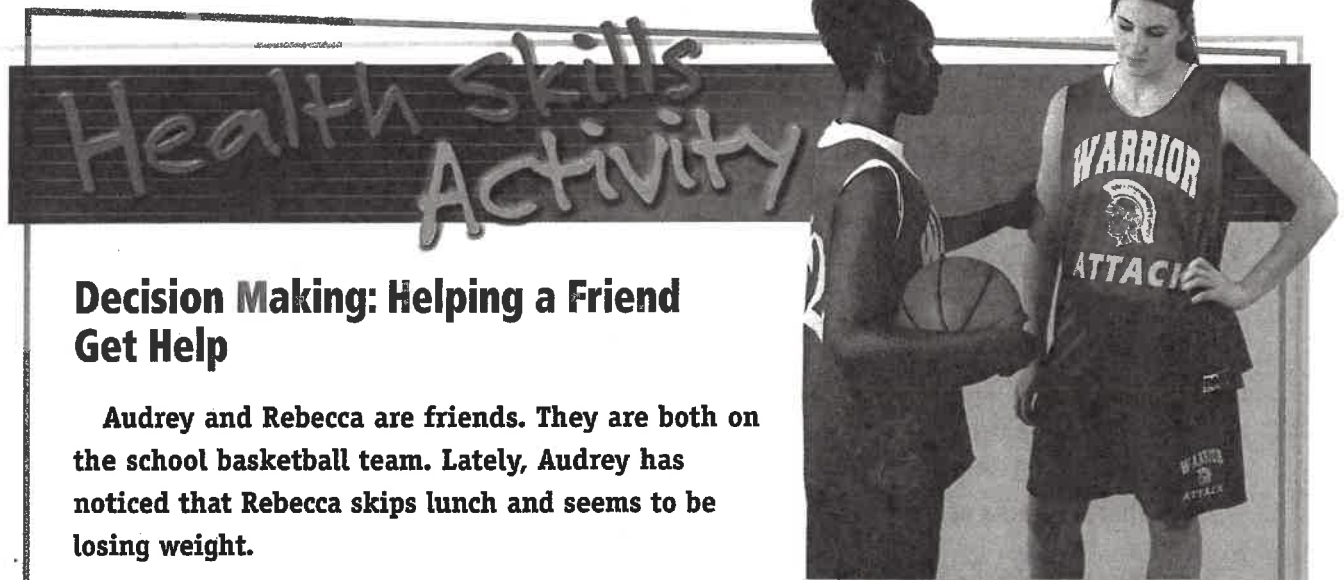
Bulimia nervosa is a disorder in which some form of purging or clearing of the digestive tract follows cycles of overeating. A person with bulimia often fasts or follows a strict diet and then *binges*, or quickly consumes large amounts of food. After eating, the person may vomit or take laxatives to purge the food from the body. Following a binge, the person may again try dieting. Other symptoms can include distorted body image and an unnatural interest in food. The exact cause of bulimia is unknown, but societal pressures, self-esteem issues, and family problems may be factors.

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF BULIMIA NERVOSA

Repeated bingeing, purging, and fasting can cause serious health problems or even death. Frequent vomiting and diarrhea can lead to dehydration, kidney damage, and irregular heartbeat. Vomiting also destroys tooth enamel; causes tooth decay; and damages the tissues of the stomach, esophagus, and mouth. Frequent use of laxatives disrupts digestion and absorption and may cause nutrient deficiencies. Laxative abuse can also change the composition of the blood. Treatment of bulimia nervosa usually includes both medication and psychological counseling.

Binge Eating Disorder

People with **binge eating disorder**, a disorder characterized by *compulsive overeating*, consume huge amounts of food at one time but do not try to purge. This disorder may signal the use of food as a coping mechanism for strong emotions or depression. Treatment involves professional psychological counseling and sometimes medication.



Health Skills Activity

Decision Making: Helping a Friend Get Help

Audrey and Rebecca are friends. They are both on the school basketball team. Lately, Audrey has noticed that Rebecca skips lunch and seems to be losing weight.

One day after practice, Rebecca tells Audrey that she is going to jog for at least a mile. Audrey is amazed. "What do you mean? You just ran up and down the court for two full hours."

Rebecca says, "I ate a salad for lunch today. I'm getting fat." Audrey suspects that Rebecca has an eating disorder and wonders how to help her.

What Would You Do?

Apply the decision-making steps to Audrey's problem.

1. State the situation.
2. List the options.
3. Weigh the possible outcomes.
4. Consider values.
5. Make a decision and act.
6. Evaluate the decision.

Psychologists and clinics that specialize in the treatment of eating disorders may offer support groups for people with these disorders. Why might support groups be helpful to individuals with eating disorders?



HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF BINGE EATING DISORDER

Binge eating disorder often results in unhealthy weight gain, which contributes to health problems such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. Gallbladder problems, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and increased risk of certain types of cancer have also been associated with this disorder.

Help for Eating Disorders

People with eating disorders need professional medical and psychological help. They may also benefit from support groups and clinics. All eating disorders are serious. If you believe a friend might be developing an eating disorder, you may want to discuss the problem with a trusted adult such as a parent, a counselor, or a school nurse. You can also help by encouraging your friend to seek professional help and by being supportive.

Lesson 2 Review

Reviewing Facts and Vocabulary

1. Define the term *fad diets*.
2. Describe the causes, symptoms, and treatment of the eating disorder *anorexia nervosa*.
3. What is *bulimia nervosa*?

Thinking Critically

4. **Evaluating.** Describe the similarities and differences between *bulimia nervosa* and binge eating disorder.
5. **Analyzing.** Why do people with eating disorders require assistance from professional health services?

Applying Health Skills

Advocacy. Think of ways to inform teens about the dangers of fad diets and other risky weight-loss strategies. With a group of classmates, plan and create a video or public service announcement (PSA) that tells teens about these dangers and gives tips for healthy weight loss.



WEB SITES Use your video or PSA as part of a Web page you develop on healthy weight management. See health.glencoe.com for help in planning and building your own Web site.



health.glencoe.com