

Fad Diets Blur the Facts About Healthy Weight Loss

(NAPSA)—When it comes to the “Battle of the Bulge,” Americans have plenty of diets from which to choose. Arguably, diet fads grabbing the most attention recently are high-fat, low-carbohydrate diets. These diets promote weight-loss strategies ranging from severe calorie restriction to eliminating an entire food group. While these diets promise a trimmer waistline, the verdict about long-term health effects is still out.

There have been no long-term studies of the high-fat, low-carbohydrate diets to determine whether this is a safe way to lose weight. On the other hand, there is growing evidence that high-carbohydrate diets, including recommended allowances of grain foods, are a safe, healthful way to regulate weight. A June 2002 U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) study comparing low-carbohydrate vs. high-carbohydrate diets showed adults who ate high-carbohydrate diets were more likely to be in the normal weight range, with the lowest average body mass index.

Because high-fat, low-carbohydrate diets severely limit or eliminate certain foods rich in complex carbohydrates, dieters often lack several vital nutrients, such as B vitamins and antioxidants. These compounds—found in grain foods, such as breads, rolls, crackers, and bagels—have been shown to alter risk factors for chronic diseases, such as certain cancers, heart disease, and diabetes.

When it comes to weight control, it is not what is eaten, but how much. Studies like the USDA Healthy Eating Index show Americans already eat plenty of higher-calorie proteins and fats, but fall short of meeting the recommended



dietary goals for the bottom half of the Food Guide Pyramid.

“While many of the current diets offer a magic-bullet solution to weight loss, the healthiest way is to eat smaller portions, cut calories, increase physical activity, and consume a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet rich in grains, fruits, and vegetables,” said Georgia Kostas, M.P.H., R.D., L.D., author and director of nutrition of the Dallas-based Cooper Clinic. “While this approach may lead to slower weight loss than some diet plans, it is healthier and more likely to last.”

Studies show this works. Researchers at the University of Colorado studied 3,000 individuals, most of whom achieved long-term weight loss success by eating a low-fat, high-carbohydrate diet and daily exercise.

“At any given time, 45 percent of women and 25 percent of men are trying to lose weight, but only one out of five are using sound, healthy weight-loss principles that will work for life, and are recommended by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Food Guide Pyramid,” added Kostas. “Consumers need to know the facts so they can make healthy lifestyle choices.”