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Research: Young Aussies jump on the fad diet bandwagon

Young Australians seem immune to the warnings about dubious ‘A list’ diets, with new research showing they are more likely to jump on the fad diet bandwagon, compared with older Australians.

The survey of 1,033 Australians, commissioned by the Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA), found 18-34 year olds are more likely to have experimented with fad diets, with six in 10 (58 per cent) having tried a certain ‘diet’ in the last 12 monthsⁱ.

This compares with 38 per cent of 35-49 year olds, and 44 per cent of 50-64 year olds.

The dietitians are urging younger Australians, who also have the worst vegetable intake in the countryⁱⁱ, to get off the dieting merry-go-round in 2017.

DAA will soon launch its tenth Australia’s Healthy Weight Week campaign (13-19 February), which aims to inspire all Australians to kick-start healthy eating habits, such as cooking more meals at home and eating the right foods, in the right portions.

Their recent survey found popular diets among young people were the sugar-free diet, meal replacement shakes, a low carb/high fat diet, a detox diet or program, the raw food diet and the Dukan diet.

“Fad diets seem to offer an easy solution, packaged in a warm and fuzzy way – often with the backing of celebrities,” said DAA Spokesperson and Accredited Practising Dietitian Professor Clare Collins.

According to Professor Collins, many of these diets try to convince people that eating a certain way, and only that way, will fix their health and weight problems – but the reality is that they often involve programs of just a few weeks.

She added that dietitians insist the best approach is to change your lifestyle, permanently.

“The good news from our survey is that, despite being seduced by fad diets, younger Australians have the right intentions – they’re the most likely to want to adopt healthier eating habits, eat more vegetables and cook at home more often,” said Professor Collins.

Twenty-one-year-old Mark Mariano received tailored nutrition advice and support from an Accredited Practising Dietitian who has helped him change his mindset from quick-fix menu plans, to accepting healthy eating as a way-of-life – improving his energy levels in the process.

The recent Western Sydney University graduate said: “I’ve been fairly unhealthy most of my life, and recently, I’ve prioritised my education. But with that chapter of my life now done and dusted, I knew it was time to make changes, especially when I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.”

He says he’s surprised everyday with how eager he is to eat certain healthy foods.

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“If someone had told me six months ago that I’d be where I am now I’d have laughed in their face. I’m investing more mind-space, time and effort into what I eat and why I’m eating. I’m spending less on take out, which my wallet is thanking me for, and I now go on daily walks and occasionally work out.

“My relationship with food has totally changed. I’m eating for my body and not for a diet glamorized by foodie culture,” said Mr Mariano.

Professor Collins said our younger years are a key time in life to set-up life-long healthy habits and prevent unwanted weight gain, which can be difficult to shift in later years.

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For further information or to organise an interview with Clare Collins, contact Felicity Curtain, Dietitians Association of Australia, on 0409 661 920.

Background

According to the Dietitians Association of Australia, the best way to forgo fad diets may be to succeed in becoming healthier the old-fashioned way. Here are some tried-and-true resolutions to try in 2017:

1. **Skip the fads:** Fad diets might bring quick weight loss results, but they don’t work in the long term. So ditch the fads and focus on sustainable changes to make a real difference to your health and wellbeing.
1. **Focus on eating regularly:** Be prepared with healthy snacks like nuts, cheese and crackers, fruit and yoghurt, to avoid crashing and burning or overeating at the next meal.
2. **Watch out for portion distortion:** When eating out, opt for an entrée-sized meal rather than a main, and never be afraid to leave food on your plate if you’re already satisfied.
3. **Start with the right fuel:** Breakfast eaters are slimmer than those who skip a morning meal, and tend to make healthier choices throughout the day.
4. **Everything in moderation:** There’s no need to deprive yourself of the foods you love. Enjoy a wide variety of foods, including ‘treat’ foods – everything in moderation!
5. **Clear fluids for a clear mind:** Go easy on the alcohol, and cut out empty kilojoules in soft drinks – sticking to tap or sparkling water will save you around 700kJ.
6. **Get moving:** Get your heart rate up for 30-60 minutes of moderate exercise each day. Take the stairs instead of the lift, or park a little further away from the shops, it all counts!
7. **Start a food diary:** Writing down everything you eat and drink helps to highlight areas you can improve.
8. **Fill up on fibre:** Fibre-rich foods like fruit and veggies, legumes and wholegrain bread help to keep us feeling fuller for longer.
9. **Up your veggies:** Less than one in 10 Australians eat enough vegetables, and adding in a few extra serves is a simple first step toward healthier eating. Start by bulking up pasta sauces and mince-based

meals with grated vegetables like carrot and zucchini, or make a big pot of vegetable soup and portion out for weekday lunches.

10. **Seek support:** An Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is your diet coach – providing you with tailored advice and support to help you achieve your goals. Visit the ‘Find an APD’ section of the Australia’s Healthy Weight Week website at healthyweightweek.com.au to find an APD in your area.

About Australia’s Healthy Weight Week

Australia’s Healthy Weight Week (AHWW), run by the Dietitians Association of Australia from 13-19 February 2017, is the perfect time to kick-start healthy eating habits.

In 2017, dietitians will be educating Australians that there’s a healthy weight that’s right for them, whilst raising awareness of the support that Accredited Practising Dietitians can offer in inspiring good health.

The week will focus on getting Australians cooking more meals at home and eating the right foods, in the right portions, as smart ways to help achieve the best weight possible.

Award-winning celebrity cook, Callum Hann, and Accredited Practising Dietitian, Themis Chryssidis (both from Sprout), are supporting AHWW in 2017. Sprout will be urging all Australians to be healthy and confident cooks in their own kitchen. Dr Andrew Rochford, medical expert and media personality, is also an ambassador of AHWW.

For more information, including the AHWW Instagram Cooking Challenge and the new bumper edition AHWW cookbook, plus nutrition tips, recipes, event details and a social media toolkit, see the AHWW website at healthyweightweek.com.au and follow AHWW at www.twitter.com/DAA_feed and use #AHWW2017.

AHWW 2017 will kick-off with a launch event in Sydney on Monday 13 February.

Note: Australia’s Healthy Weight Week 2017 is proudly supported by Meat and Livestock Australia, Healthy Food Guide, CanPrint, Australian Mushroom Growers Association, Australian Chicken Meat Federation, Xyris, McKenzie’s Foods, and Almond Board of Australia.

ⁱ Omnipoll survey (September 2016) of 1,033 Australians aged 18-64 years, commissioned by the Dietitians Association of Australia.

ⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2015). National Health Survey: First Results, 2014-15. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4364.0.55.001~2014-15~Main%20Features~Daily%20intake%20of%20fruit%20and%20vegetables~28>