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On Your Mark, Get Set—Go!

BY WINSTON J. CRAIG

Making new year resolutions can be fun; keeping them may be something else. In January, many Americans resolve to go on a diet to lose some extra pounds they have gained. Some resolve to begin a regular exercise program and endeavor to maintain a healthier lifestyle.

As the holiday season is over and the new year begins, these resolutions appear to be needed more than ever. Especially when we see that two out of every three adult Americans are overweight.

But which diet is the best? The marketplace contains a host of diets, all promising quick and wonderful results. With names like *Sugar Busters*, *Protein Power*, *Fit for Life*, *South Beach*, *Eat More and Weigh Less*, *Slim Fast*, and the *Hollywood Diet*, losing weight never sounded so easy and so much fun as now. But are these diets safe and reliable? Can they guarantee one to lose 20 pounds over the next six months, and to keep it off for the next five to ten years?

The media has done an effective job promoting low-carb diets such as *Atkins* and *South Beach*. Carbs have been presented as being the real villains. While these low-carb diets can provide a quick fix with measurable weight loss over the first few months, they are really unsafe and unhealthful diets over the long haul.

Carbohydrate-bashing has become popular in the press, but the overwhelming evidence of science suggests that a high fiber, high starch diet (containing slow-release carbs), which is modest in both fat and protein and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, is the most healthful diet. This is actually the very opposite of the *Atkins* diet, which allows you to eat all of the high fat foods you wish.

One of the secrets to successful weight loss is portion control. Many people are really unaware how much they actually eat, due to super-sizing and portion distortion in the fast-food industry. Over the past 20 years, the average

[Losing weight never sounded so easy and so much fun]



food portion size has increased from about 50 to 135 calories, while the average beverage serving has increased from eight to 20 ounces. Smaller servings should be the order of the day.

Furthermore, it is important that we remove from our desks, cars, cupboards, and purses all easy-to-grab, quick-to-consume, high-calorie snack foods and drinks. These can be ruinous to any weight management program.

Dieting can only be effective in the long term when adjustments to food intake are combined with a regular exercise program. Twenty to 30 minutes of exercise every day will keep the basal metabolic rate elevated, depression at bay, and the fat cells burning.

Winston J. Craig is a professor of nutrition at Andrews University.