

Keep That New Year's Resolution!

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Often, New Year's resolutions include health and weight loss goals but may have already fallen by the way side as we enter February. As Americans, we long for the "quick fix" and painless, easy routes to better health and a trimmer figure. Unfortunately, we are drawn to gimmicks, fads, and advice from "professionals" who are merely trying to sell their product with little regard for our best interest. Americans spend \$40 billion on diets and diet related products each year. Most of us know the healthiest way to lose weight and *keep it off* is to make permanent lifestyle changes like eating healthier but less, and moving more. Soon the small changes become a habit and are incorporated into your routine. Here are some questions to ask in order to recognize the "quick fix" or fad diet:

- Does the diet eliminate or restrict certain food groups?
- Is the author's or supplier's reputation questionable or unknown?
- Will someone make money on the diet?
- Would the diet be difficult to follow for the *rest of your life*?
- Does the diet promise quick results?
- Does the diet promote gimmicks, gadgets and/or other "miracles?"
- Does the diet call for unusual items or require you to order special food?

If the answer to any of these is "yes," it's time to look elsewhere! Getting started on a healthy lifestyle plan that includes weight loss need not be confusing. Follow these guidelines:

- Lean on God for strength.
- Consult your health professional.
- Learn the basics of good nutrition.
- Consume 250-500 fewer calories each day, either by eating less food and/or increasing exercise.
- Eat a balanced diet with lots of variety, whole grains and nutrient-rich fruits and veggies.
- Limit your intake of refined carbohydrates (white bread, white rice, cakes, cookies, donuts, or other highly processed foods).
- Avoid drinking extra calories through sodas and alcohol.
- Exercise for 30-45 minutes at least 5 times per week.
- Safe weight loss should not exceed ½ - 2 lbs. per week.

If you are looking to make improvements in your health, reduce your risk of diseases like heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and cancer, and maintain the weight that is right for you, a "quick fix" or "fad diet" will only disappoint you and could have negative health consequences. Keep that New Year's Resolution and consider the **DASH to Health** diet and lifestyle plan. For more information visit: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/index.htm>.