

Fast fat loss unhealthy

by Kathy Breard

Battalion Staff

One of the more popular New Year's resolutions is to lose weight — a goal most want to achieve as soon as possible.

But diet experts around the Texas A&M campus favor a slow, gradual weight loss for people who really want to keep weight off.

The quickie dieters usually are disappointed because they may lose the 10 pounds they've always dreamed of losing, but are likely to gain it back.

Society's attitude toward people who are overweight encourages emotional stress. Many Americans want to be thin, and it's a national obsession to look like the skinny fashion models in magazines.

Americans favor the "22-year-old concept," which means everyone should look as lean and trim as a young adult, Dr. William A. McIntosh, associate professor of sociology at Texas A&M, says.

But in Asian and European societies, overweight people are more readily accepted. In fact, some of these societies prefer a heftier frame. In some African societies, women are sent off to be "fattened up" before their wedding day.

The concept of the perfect body has changed in the last 20 years, and many of the women of average weight on Texas A&M's campus would be considered underweight in a European culture, Dr. Kerry Hope, a psychologist with the Texas A&M Student Counseling Service, says.

Students on Texas A&M's campus have experimented with several diets and voice their opinions on the effectiveness of some reducing plans.

Juliana Hunsaker, an elementary education major from Houston, who has tried several diets, including the Scarsdale Diet, says Weight Watchers is the best diet she's ever found.

Hunsaker says she didn't keep off the 10 pounds she lost last semester through the Weight Watchers program, but with self-discipline it would have had better results.

"I go on binges and I don't want to miss out when my friends go out to eat," she says.

Weight Watchers is an eating program that allows a person to eat a variety of foods while following a basic meal plan.

"I like Weight Watchers because it teaches you to eat in a natural, healthy way," Hunsaker says.

However, she takes a dimmer view of the Scarsdale Diet.

"It was a pain because I had to buy special food, and I couldn't substitute different foods like I could in Weight Watchers," she says.

The Scarsdale Diet is a low fat, low carbohydrate diet of 1,000 calories or less per day. The diet is limited to 14 days, and allows for a variety of food combinations, but no substitutes.

Some of the dieters interviewed wished to remain anonymous because they consider dieting a personal problem.

Kim, who recently moved to Bryan from Colorado, says she

likes Weight Watchers for the positive attitude she gets from it.

"Weight Watchers never mentions being skinny — it's just a matter of feeling good about yourself," Kim says.

But to feel good about themselves, many people think they have to be skinny, or at least should be on some drastic diet. So, they look for a "magic diet" with the quickest, easiest methods of reducing weight.

You've probably heard them all, ranging from starving yourself to drinking liquid protein. But just how effective are these diets, and are they safe to use?

Local experts have some suggestions for finding a suitable diet.

"Any diet will result in weight loss if the amount of energy eaten is less than the amount used," says Karen Kubena, a Texas A&M assistant professor of food science and nutrition. "The problem is keeping that weight off."

"A sensible weight loss plan provides adequate vitamins, minerals, and a steady loss of 1 to 2 pounds a week — if the diet meets these requirements, it's probably not just a fad."

Many diets claim to carry all the needed nutrients, but some tend to cause a much more rapid weight loss than a couple of pounds a week. That's dangerous for some people, Hope says.

People need a wide variety of meats with protein, as well as fruits and vegetables. Another fact to consider is that people don't absorb all the vitamins they eat in the course of a day, Kubena says. Although the key to what constitutes a healthy diet depends on the individual, some people need certain vitamins, such as iron and potassium, more than others, she says.

Another example of a diet used by Texas A&M students is the Cambridge diet. Advertisements claim that the Cambridge includes 100 percent of the minimum daily requirements of vitamins and minerals, as well as 75 percent of the protein. The diet experts' objections are based on the restriction to 330 calories a day. For four weeks, the Cambridge is the sole source of food. After that, it is used as a supplement to a regular, controlled diet.

"Any diet that has a disproportionate amount of any food group can be harmful," Dr. Hope says.

"There is nothing healthy about a liquid protein diet — the Cambridge is just a variation of that. You can get sick in a hurry and most college students can't afford that."

Another problem with the Cambridge is that it doesn't change the eating habits of the dieter, which is the secret to good dieting, Hope says.



The Cambridge Diet may not change the eating habits of the individual, but Texas A&M students interviewed seem to approve of the diet. Students seem to get interested in the Cambridge because of its quick results, and they don't appear to worry about damaging their health.

"The Cambridge helps you lose weight fast and you get your vitamins to keep you from feeling drained — it never made me ill," Sharon H., a sophomore business major from Houston, says.

Sharon, who was on the diet for two weeks, says that for her, the loss of a lot of water weight in the first three days gave her an incentive to stick with the diet.

Sheila Davis, a junior aerospace engineering major, who is a Cambridge counselor living in a dorm on campus, had as many as 35 customers at the beginning of the semester. She also thinks the diet's quick results give an incentive to the people she sells it to. However, a lot of her customers need only to lose about 5 pounds, and once they accomplish that goal they go back to their old eating ways. She herself lost 6 pounds while on the diet strictly for two weeks, and has since kept the weight off.

"I use it as a nutritional supplement since I'm not on the meal plan, and just eating across the street in restaurants won't do it," Sheila says.

Tammy J., a Cambridge counselor living in Sevilla apartments, says some of her customers drink the Cambridge for a quick breakfast.

Using a quick reducer such as the Cambridge is fine for some individuals, but not if you are looking for a permanent weight loss, Kubena says. In order to accomplish long-term weight loss, you must change your eating habits, or you may gain all the pounds back.

"The point is that if you lose weight and gain it all back, you do more harm than good to your

body," she says. People often practice this "yo-yo effect," which is fluctuating from losing weight to gaining it back plus a couple of pounds.

The pros and cons of any diet depend on the individual, for weight problems result from a variety of factors. Aside from overindulgence, the cause of obesity can be psychological, or it could be a legitimate health problem.

For that reason, before going on a diet, check with a doctor. In the past, the A.P. Beutel Health Center has diagnosed thyroid gland problems, or vitamin deficiencies, both of which can contribute to a weight problem.

A physical problem is as much a cause of obesity as anything else, she said. "We at the counseling center won't treat the psychological side of dieting until students check that possibility," Hope says. Obesity can be caused by hormonal, genetic, or metabolic problems. There may be an imbalance of hormones, or a greater tendency for a person to accumulate body fat because of a slow metabolism. Hormones are under the control of genes, which are inherited.

Hope is also one of the psychologists at the Student Counseling Service who sponsors group therapy for people who want to change their attitude about eating.

Group support is an important aspect of the weight control groups at the Student Counseling Service. That concept is also part of the philosophy of such groups as Weight Watchers and Overeaters Anonymous.

The positive reinforcement a group can give the individual can help, especially since the family at home is not around at college to back you up, Hope says. Sometimes it's easier to get involved in a diet with somebody else.

But Kubena says the problem with a group is that its members begin to depend too much on the group for support, and once they try to be independent of it, they could gain the weight back.

Layers of clothes key to warmth

by Diane Yount

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So, you thought you were going to have spring all winter? Sun, shades, and coconut oil? Wrong!

Cold weather blew into College Station Monday, lingered around until Tuesday and decided to stay on. Oh, the sun will probably breakthrough for a slight warming period, but count on a frigid fanny for the next few months.

If you're worried about protecting that and other parts of your anatomy, remember, wind or temperature cannot be controlled, but clothing can.

"Select clothing for your activities as well as for outdoor conditions," says Dr. Ann Vanderpoorten, clothing specialist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

For people who love how-to lists, there are a few stan-

dard precautions that should be taken to prevent frostbite.

— The layer closest to the skin should be lightweight, usually cotton.

— The second layer should be an insulation layer that will keep warm air trapped around the body. Bulky fabrics work best.

— Blazers, windbreakers, shoes and waterproof pants should compose the outermost layer. They should keep the other layers from getting wet. They should also be easily removable, in case the situation heats up.

— A hat or hood is important too. Up to 75 percent of body heat may be lost if the head is unprotected.

If you enjoy being outdoors, face the fact that for a while, the weather is going to be nippy. Dress appropriately.

And if you enjoy warmth, stay inside. And cuddle.