
FTC Consumer Alert

Federal Trade Commission ■ Bureau of Consumer Protection ■ Office of Consumer and Business Education

Paunch Lines: Weight Loss Claims Are No Joke For Dieters

Are you one of the estimated 50 million Americans who will go on a diet this year? If so, you may be tempted by advertisements for products promising easy, quick ways to lose weight. You should know that when it comes to losing weight, gimmicks usually don't deliver on their promises.

While some dieters succeed in taking off weight, perhaps as few as five percent manage to keep it off in the long run. Most experts agree that the best way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories and burn more energy by increasing physical activity. Experts suggest aiming for a goal loss of about a pound a week. This usually means cutting about 500 calories a day from your diet, eating healthy, low-fat foods, finding a regular exercise activity you enjoy, and sticking to it.

When it comes to evaluating claims for weight loss products, the Federal Trade Commission recommends a healthy portion of skepticism. Before you spend money on products or programs that promise fast or easy weight loss, weigh the claims and consider these tips:

- ***“Lose 30 Pounds in Just 30 Days.”*** As a rule, the faster you lose weight, the more likely you are to gain it back. Also, fast weight loss could harm your health. Unless your doctor advises it, don't look for programs that promise quick weight loss.
 - ***“Lose All the Weight You Can For Just \$39.99.”*** Some weight loss programs have hidden costs. For example, some don't advertise the fact that you must buy their prepackaged meals that cost more than the program fees. Before you sign up for any weight loss program, ask for all the costs. Get them in writing.
 - ***“Lose Weight While You Sleep.”*** Claims for diet products and programs that promise weight loss without effort are phony.
 - ***“Lose Weight And Keep It Off For Good.”*** Be suspicious about products promising long-term or permanent weight loss. To lose weight and keep it off, you must change how you eat and how much you exercise.
 - ***“John Doe Lost 84 Pounds in Six Weeks.”*** Don't be misled by someone else's weight loss claims. Even if the claims are true, someone else's success may have little relation to your own chances of success.
 - ***“Scientific Breakthrough...Medical Miracle.”*** There are no miracle weight loss products. To lose weight, you have to reduce your intake of calories and increase your physical activity. Be skeptical about exaggerated claims.
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For more information, visit the Federal Trade Commission's web site. Additional information on nutrition and weight loss is available through the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases' Weight-control Information Network (1-800-WIN-8098). To report fraudulent weight loss product claims, contact your state Attorney General, local consumer protection office, or Better Business Bureau.

The FTC works for the consumer to prevent fraudulent, deceptive and unfair business practices in the marketplace and to provide information to help consumers spot, stop and avoid them. To file a complaint, or to get free information on any of 150 consumer topics, call toll-free, **1-877-FTC-HELP** (1-877-382-4357), or use the online complaint form. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identity theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies U.S. and abroad.