

## Q. Can diet supplements help me lose weight?

**A.** Sadly, no. Long-term, there still is no magic pill that can make excess pounds melt away. But recognizing that you need to lose some weight is important. Being overweight increases your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and other serious health conditions. About two-thirds of all adults in the United States are either overweight or obese. That means millions of people need to lose weight. And diet supplement makers know it.

Advertisements for diet supplements first appeared in American newspapers in the late 1800s. And it's been a booming, and controversial business ever since. In an 1896 ad for a weight-loss remedy called "Get Rid of Fat," the manufacturer promised users that they could lose 10 pounds in 10 days. But in fine print, the ad noted that best results are achieved by avoiding all fatty foods and taking long walks every day.

Statements like this are still being used today by diet pill makers. It's a \$2.4 billion industry. And despite U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulations to prevent fraud and serious health problems, diet pills are still sold by the millions. In a recent study, researchers looked at the claims of hundreds of supplements for weight loss. But they found no link to significant weight loss from any of them. Most showed less than a two-pound weight-loss benefit compared to placebo groups. Some participants who used products with green tea, fiber, and low-fat dairy reported weight loss of three



to four pounds. But just like in the 1896 miracle cure ad, today's diet pill makers recommend using their products with a low-calorie diet.

Some of these diet products proved to be more dangerous than useless. While some just caused bloating and gas, others were linked to more serious health issues like strokes and heart attacks.

Weight loss does not come in pill or powder form. It's a lifelong process. If you want to lose weight, skip the diet supplements, save your money, and:

- **Eat healthy foods** like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, and fish in moderate amounts.
- **Get regular exercise.** At least 30 to 60 minutes most days to lose weight.
- **Limit seconds.** Skip the desserts, sugary drinks, and fast foods.
- **Avoid late-night snacking.**

And if you need extra help, join a proven weight management group like Weight Watchers®. Or see a dietician to help you develop a plan to eat right and lose weight.

*Sources:*  
*Journal of Sport, Nutrition, and Exercise Metabolism. 2011.*  
*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*  
*American Dietetic Association.*

