

7 questions about diet stories



Diet and weight loss success stories rate top of the popularity stakes for news and current affairs programs. Unfortunately, they can add to the confusion by over-simplifying the issues, and missing some vital facts or balance in the messages they send. Here are ten key questions that can reveal the full story and make things clearer.

- 1. Who's getting paid?**
Was the person featured in the story a paid spokesperson? Did the story seem like an infomercial?
- 2. Was the story about a new diet pill?**
Research shows that almost all over-the counter dietary supplements available at the pharmacy or supermarket have little if any effect on weight loss. Claims for boosting metabolic rate are particularly suspect. A quick fix will only trim your wallet.
- 3. How many people have tested it?**
A glowing testimonial, even by a celebrity, doesn't mean a product or diet works for everyone – or even works at all.
- 4. Was the research dodgy?**
A small group of people road-testing a diet pill for a TV program is unlikely to offer accurate results, especially when they know what product they are trialling. Good research often needs hundreds of subjects studied under carefully controlled conditions.

- 5. What about diet and exercise?**
Positive changes with diet and exercise are often overlooked when a diet pill or potion receives all the praise. It's possible that the results may have been obtained purely by eating better and moving more. Most pills and potions come with the rider "Use in conjunction with a diet and exercise program."
- 6. How long does it work for?**
You want to know whether a diet works months or a year later, not just for a few weeks. Any low-energy diet can strip weight off fast. And then the weight comes back on, with interest.

Nothing beats a good diet and regular activity for getting into shape!

"If people in the media cannot decide whether they are in the business of reporting news or manufacturing propaganda, it is all the more important that the public understand that difference, and choose their news sources accordingly."

Thomas Sowell