Thinking of Starting a Diet?

There are many fad diets advertised every year with step-by-step book guides, TV commercials and videos. Many of the fad diets today which encourage increased consumption of fruits and vegetables make them slightly healthier than the average American diet. However, usually the restrictions or extremes of these diets can make them dangerous to individuals with certain health conditions and make them difficult to adhere to. Ultimately, the only scientifically backed diet is the Mediterranean Diet, which has been shown to reduce risk of death from all causes, including those due to heart disease and cancer.[1,2]

Before embarking on a new diet consider the following:

Who:	Consider who is writing and/or endorsing this diet. Is it a single individual or a group of people?
What:	Even if a researcher or doctor is the endorser or author of this diet, consider what scientific evidence they have to back up their diet. Are they sharing specific stories of individuals or are they quoting research from multiple reliable sources? Many diets make claims such as 'No calorie counting!' Before embarking on a diet, consider looking into if these claims are true. Many fad diets will contradict themselves by advertising one thing but actually instructing the opposite.
When:	How recently was this diet discovered or invented? Most diets that are recently developed haven't had the time to be properly researched or proven.
Consult:	Make sure to consult your doctor before starting a diet. Some health problems or medications can be affected by dieting!

Take-aways for weight management:

Make a it a lifestyle choice instead of a diet.
The phrase 'Going on a diet' usually means a short period of drastically changing one's diet and then reverting back to old eating habits. It is possible to lose some weight with this method in the short term, but maintaining this weight loss is less likely because when people are 'off the diet' they revert back to old eating habits.

Make small changes.
Instead of sacrificing or giving up certain foods for a short period of time, slowly modify your eating habits, e.g. adding in at least one vegetable into every dinner meal.

Moderation is better than eliminating one food group completely.

Be aware of your portion size.

Focus on nutrient dense foods such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, lean meats/poultry, fish, and whole grains. Minimize calorically dense foods such as chips, sweets, pastries, and fried foods.

1. Trichopoulou. (2003). 030626 Adherence to a Mediterranean Diet and Survival in a Greek Population, 1–10. http://www.nejm.org/doi/pdf/10.1056/nejmoa025039
2. Mediterranean Dietary Pattern and Prediction of All-Cause Mortality in a US Population. (2007). Mediterranean Dietary Pattern and Prediction of All-Cause Mortality in a US Population, 1–8 http://archinte.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=770019

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