

Plagued by diet disasters? A visit to a registered dietitian could help

DALLAS – March 16, 2007 – Americans are no strangers to dieting failure.

Studies indicate more than one-third of adults are trying to lose weight, but few have long-term success. Many can't stick to diets and exercise routines and struggle to stay afloat in a sea of popular diets, fitness programs and foods with "healthy" claims.

But weight-loss seekers have someone to turn to.

A registered dietitian can help people achieve diet success and a healthy lifestyle, and National Nutrition Month in March is a great time to consult one of these nutrition experts, said Bernadette Latson, assistant professor of clinical nutrition at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

"People can expect to get valuable information from a registered dietitian on a personalized approach to nutrition, one that's tailored for what they can and want to do," said Ms. Latson, a registered dietitian. "People fail at dieting because they set unrealistic goals or can't stick to a plan, but dietitians can craft a specific plan so people can incorporate change into their lives for the long haul."

Obesity is epidemic in the U.S., where less than half of the nation's adults do vigorous physical activity in a given week, according to federal statistics. These people face increased risk of developing maladies such as heart disease and diabetes.

Losing weight and keeping it off is a key component in avoiding these health problems.

But what popular diet, if any, do you choose? How much exercise is needed? What foods choices are best? Butter or margarine? Fish or no fish? The questions are endless.

A registered dietitian can sort through these issues and, by taking into account a person's individual goals and lifestyle, craft an individualized daily eating and exercise plan, said Lona Sandon, another assistant professor of clinical nutrition and registered dietitian at UT Southwestern.

It always starts with limiting caloric intake, adding exercise and taking things slowly, she said.

"A major cause of diet failure is when someone tries to lose too much too fast," Ms. Sandon said. "A steady loss of maybe a pound a week is a far better goal, and we can help you achieve your goals."

Registered dietitians have at least a bachelor's degree from an accredited college with course work approved by the Commission on Accreditation for Dietetics Education. They must meet certain

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other educational and training requirements as well.

The American Dietetic Association's list of nutritionally challenged candidates includes people who:

- Need to lose weight;
- Want to eat smarter and gain information on health myths, reading food labels or eating out or at work without ruining an eating plan;
- Recently had gastric bypass surgery;
- Are pregnant or breastfeeding and want to find key nutrients to benefit mother and baby;
- Want to improve their performance in sports; or
- Have diabetes, heart problems or high blood pressure.

“We can help anyone who needs good nutritional information or who needs to implement a nutritional plan,” Ms. Sandon said.

To make an appointment with a UT Southwestern dietitian, call 214-648-3678, or to find a registered dietitian in your area, visit www.eatright.org.

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