Weighing the Evidence in Diet Ads

Pre-reading

Questions: What do you know about the subject of this reading? What questions do you have about it?
Definitions: Federal Trade Commission – agency that works to eliminate deceptive marketplace practices
Skepticism – a doubting or questioning attitude
Carbs – abbreviation for the word carbohydrates which are sugars and starches

Reading

Flip through a magazine, scan a newspaper, or channel surf and you see them everywhere: Ads that promote quick and easy weight loss without diets or exercise. Wouldn’t it be nice if, as the ads claim, you could lose weight simply by taking a pill, wearing a patch, or rubbing in a cream? Too bad claims like that are almost always false.

Doctors, dieticians, and other experts agree that the best way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories and increase your physical activity so you burn more energy. A reasonable goal is to lose about a pound a week. For most people, that means cutting about 500 calories a day from their diet, eating a variety of nutritious foods, and exercising regularly.

When it comes to evaluating claims for weight loss products, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) recommends a healthy portion of skepticism. Before you spend money on products that promise fast and easy results, weigh the claims carefully.

“Lose weight without diet or exercise!” Achieving a healthy weight takes work. Take a pass on any product that promises miraculous results without the effort. The only thing you’ll lose is money.

“Lose weight no matter how much you eat of your favorite foods!” Beware of any product that claims that you can eat all you want of high-calorie foods and still lose weight. Losing weight requires sensible food choices. Filling up on healthy vegetables and fruits can make it easier to say no to fattening sweets and snacks.

“Lose weight permanently! Never diet again!” Even if you’re successful in taking the weight off, permanent weight loss requires permanent lifestyle changes. Don’t trust any product that promises once and for all results without ongoing maintenance.

“Block the absorption of fat, carbs, or calories!” There is no magic non-prescription pill that will allow you to block the absorption of fat, carbs, or calories. They key to curbing your craving for those “downfall foods” is portion control. Limit yourself to a smaller serving or slimmer slice.

“Lose 30 pounds in 30 days!” Losing weight at the rate of a pound or two a week is the most effective way to take it off and keep it off. At best, products promising rapid weight loss are false. At worst, they can ruin your health.

“Lose weight with our miracle diet patch or cream!” You’ve seen the ads for diet patches or creams that claim to melt away the pounds. Don’t believe them. There’s nothing you can wear or apply to your skin that will cause you to lose weight.

Be skeptical of the numerous diet ads you see. Your health and your pocket-book will thank you!

Level 6.5
Understanding

1. What is a healthy amount of weight to lose per week? _____________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

2. What is the best way to achieve weight loss? _____________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

3. What are “downfall foods”? ____________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

4. Why should people stay away from the diet gimmicks? (List at least two reasons.) ______
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

5. Why do people get “hooked” by these diet gimmicks? ____________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

6. How can people curb their cravings? _____________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

7. What does the word maintenance mean in this reading? ________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: What’s your experience with advertised diet products? Have you or someone you know
tried any? What were the results?