Dear Alice:

Can you give me some information about Slim Fast? The commercials on television say that one can lose lots of weight by drinking a constant diet of this stuff, but I wonder if this stuff will make up a balanced diet.

? Not a Kathie Lee Gifford wanna-be

Answer

Dear Not a Kathie Lee Gifford wanna-be,

The Slim Fast shake is a milk-based product that has been fortified with additional vitamins and minerals. The Slim Fast plan has changed over the years, and the most recent version recommends that a person have a Slim Fast Meal-On-The-Go for breakfast, combine a Meal-On-The-Go with 200 calories worth of other foods for lunch and a sensible dinner that is roughly 1/4 lean protein, 1/2 vegetables, and 1/4 starch.

Healthy snacks such as such as fruits, vegetables and lean or reduced-fat dairy products and whole grains are also allowed, with their quantities determined by how much a person weighs and how much s/he wants to lose. A Meal-On-The-Go could include the Slim Fast Shake described above, as well as their own brand of snack bars or meal bars. Slim Fast also encourages its customers to participate in regular physical activity and offers support services via the Internet and telephone in order to help them achieve and maintain long-term weight loss.

Because the Slim-Fast plan allows plenty of room for a wide range of foods, a balanced diet is indeed possible when following this regimen. Weight loss may or may not occur, depending on what the person was eating before s/he started the plan, and how closely s/he sticks to the plan. Weight is lost when more calories are burned than are consumed, but the number of calories we need changes over our lifetime and fluctuates based on a number of factors, including age, gender, physical activity, present weight, and hormones.

Although Slim Fast's focus is on making healthy food choices rather than calorie counting, it can work for some people because the types of foods allowed on the diet tend to be low in calories themselves. The amount of food eaten is also controlled, which may help the person eat fewer calories before s/he began the diet. However, if someone ends up eating the same amount or more calories on this diet as s/he were eating before, they may not lose weight,
even if the plan was followed correctly. Additionally, if the person does lose weight by
following this diet, then s/he would also have to adjust her/his diet periodically and keep
reducing the caloric intake, or exercise more, in order for additional weight loss occur.

It is possible, and sometimes very likely, for someone to regain weight after going off the diet
if s/he does not keep watching how many calories are consumed. This is true of every diet,
whether it's Slim Fast or Weight Watchers or any other kind out of commercial weight loss
plan out there. For this reason, dieting may not be for everyone.

Based on your question it sounds like you may be considering trying Slim Fast (or some other
weight loss product). Have you given thought to why a product like this is appealing? Are you
unhappy with your weight, or has your weight started to impact your health status? Remember
that in most of the ads for weight loss plans and products there is tiny print that says "results
not typical." This means that the average person will not have the same outcome as the more
extreme cases showcased in the effort to convince you to buy the plan/product(s).

If you have tried a few options and found that nothing has worked so far, you may want to
consult with a nutritionist or registered dietician who can help you design a plan that does.
S/he can help you determine if and how much weight you need or want to lose and then work
with you on a individual plan to incorporate changes in eating and exercising that will lead to
permanent, healthy weight loss.

All the best as you contemplate this product and issues associated with healthier eating!

Alice!
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Resources
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