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No quick fix for excess weight, say experts

Fad diets don't bring long-term success; they may even be dangerous

■ BY JUDITH TAN

QUICK-FIX weight loss programmes are everywhere and they all claim to produce easy weight loss.

However, doctors and dietitians say such magical short cuts do not offer long-term success and may even be dangerous.

Yet, many people in Singapore, particularly women, continue to try fad diets to look and feel better.

Dr Adrian Wang, a consultant psychiatrist at the Gleneagles Medical Centre, said being slim is "viewed as attractive by most people".

"But the truth is that being thin doesn't necessarily mean healthy."

The 2004 National Health Survey said nearly 7 per cent of Singaporeans are obese and this number is rising.

Dr Vanessa Keleher, an associate consultant with the Department of Psychological Medicine at the National University Hospital, added: "We have become such an instant society, with an unrealistic view of instant results for every thing, including weight loss."

Their remarks came in the wake of the death of a British mother of five who drank four litres of water in two hours in a bid to lose weight.

Ms Jacqueline Henson, 40 - who died in Britain last month - was on a controversial diet termed the LighterLife Plan, which requires a person to cut caloric intake to 500 calories a day and consume four litres of water to compensate.

Fitness trainer and nutritionist Abidah Mahmood almost went the same way as Ms Henson when she tried to shed her excess weight 10 years ago.

Her weight problems started in 1992.

"With a family history of weight-related health issues, I was desperate to lose most of my 80kg," the thirty-something, who is better known as DeeDee, told The Straits Times.

Her father died from a heart attack, a brother died from stroke and her mother is now wheelchair-bound after a stroke.

In desperation, DeeDee popped pills, turned bulimic and tried all kinds of diets, settling on an all-orange-juice diet.

"It was after a cruel remark by a man in a lift. He told me to tuck in my shirt when I was in leotards - obviously referring to my tummy," she said.

Her juice diet - also known as the Hollywood Diet - caused such a bad gastric reaction that she was hospitalised for quite some time.

"The danger here is that there are people out there who suffer from eating disorder

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