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Seeing through diet schemes

There are so many sources to get nutrition information these day- just about everyone you talk to thinks they're an expert in nutrition. The unfortunate truth is a lot of the nutrition advice out there (even if well-meaning) can be harmful either physically or emotionally (hello fear mongers!), aren't based on science, or are unnecessary things you need to pay attention to or change in your eating.

I put together some "red flags" when evaluating a nutrition program

- A quick fix is promised
- Information that is based on a single study or animal study
- Advice not consistent with recommendations from a credible association (examples include Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Diabetes Association, American Heart Association)
- Health claims that sound too good to be true
- Recommendations to buy a nutrition product especially if the person who recommends it is selling the product
- Unregulated terms that can't be measured such as "miracle" or "immune-boosting"
- Lists good and bad foods or food categories
- One general eating plan for everybody

Now, I'm not saying that if your plan checks the box for one of these items they aren't a credible nutrition program. However, I do want you to be leery of taking their advice. I want you to ask questions and look beyond the shiny picture they may be painting for you. Many programs aren't targeted to help your health at all. Some are designed for you to fail when not following their plan/taking their products, so people continue to go back and spend more money. After all, the U.S. diet market is worth \$58 billion dollars.

Questions to ask before you invest your time, health, and money into something

- Does the program fit your lifestyle and is sustainable for a long period of time?
- Does the program address how to continue results after the program is complete?
- Is it focused on products or food?
- How is the program taking your individual goals & health conditions into consideration?
- What is the medical need and supporting research on the product/supplement?
- How will the diet impact your social life?
- What does the science say on the claims and outcomes of the program/product?

Not sure if the plan you're considering is right for you? As a dietitian with extensive training in the science of human nutrition, I would be happy to help you evaluate the plan with your health and safety as my priority.