

* DO FAD DIETS WORK?

Which of them really work, and should you try them? Find out from Jaclyn Reutens, dietitian at Aptima Nutrition & Sports Consultants.

ALTERNATE-DAY DIET

HOW IT WORKS: Pig out on Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. But nibble on Monday, Wednesday and Friday by consuming 20 per cent of your usual daily calorie intake. The rationale: Since you diet only on alternate days, you don't end up feeling deprived. Research conducted on mice, and published in the *Journal of Lipid Research*, found that eating half as much on alternate days may shrink your fat cells, and protect you against obesity and diabetes.

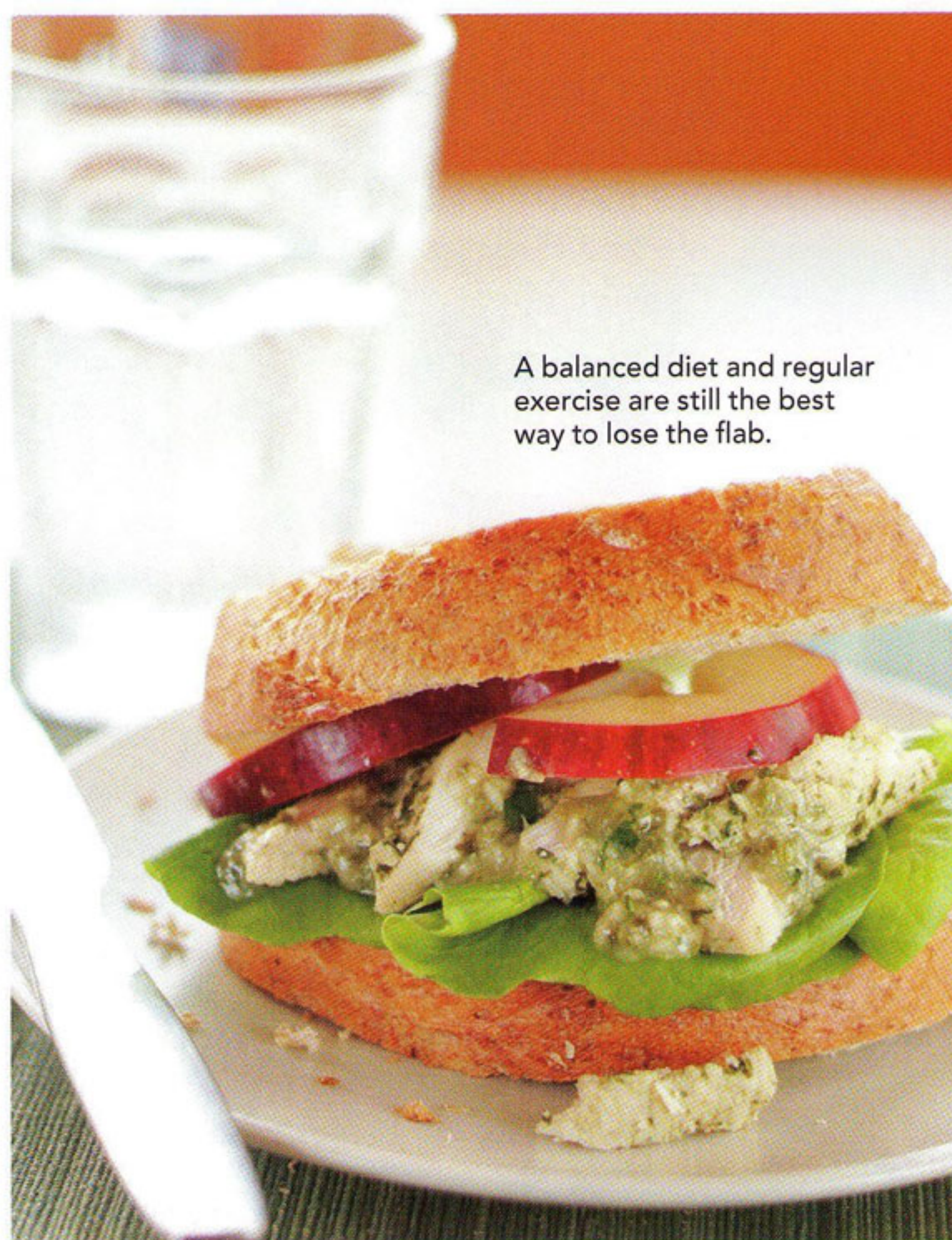
SHOULD YOU TRY IT? Not recommended. Imagine eating 3,000 calories one day, and 400 the next. Your body's metabolic system will experience a yoyo effect, and this is disruptive to healthy weight loss. If you want to give this a go, incorporate lots of fruits and vegetables on binge days, and go easy on the sugary and fatty, deep fried foods.

5-FACTOR DIET

HOW IT WORKS: Five is the magic number, from the number of elements each meal should include (protein, complex carbohydrates, fibre, fat and fluids), to five meals a day and five-minute recipes that contain five ingredients. There's a five-day exercise plan consisting of five exercises that you do for five minutes each. There's one cheat day a week when you can eat anything you like.

SHOULD YOU TRY IT? In theory, it captures the essentials of a healthy diet: carbs, proteins, fats, fibre and fluids. But this diet requires a considerable amount of time and effort to follow, and may not be sustainable for working adults who eat out most of the time. This diet provides enough proteins, vitamins, minerals, fibre, water and fat but may lack carbohydrates (think: low-carb diet). Go ahead and try it, but ensure that the carbohydrates suggested are from the bread and cereal food group, and not the vegetable or fruits food group.

enjoy your diet by focusing on the details. A recent study published in *The Journal of Consumer Research* found that people got bored eating jelly beans sooner if they saw general information like "jelly bean #7". But they enjoyed the food more if they saw flavour details like "cherry #7". So think about the exact dressing and ingredients in your next salad, or the specific fruit you're having for dessert. This will reduce the feeling of repetition and increase your enjoyment of a healthy diet.



A balanced diet and regular exercise are still the best way to lose the flab.

FLAT-BELLY DIET

HOW IT WORKS: This diet centres around monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA). It calls for a MUFA food, like olive oil, sunflower oil, avocado and nuts, at every meal. The diet also advocates eating wholegrains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and limiting meat intake. It also recommends "optional" exercise like 25 minutes brisk walking or strength training. It also claims to be able to flatten the tummy.

SHOULD YOU TRY IT? MUFA is good for lowering cholesterol, but there is not enough scientific evidence to prove that it flattens the belly. There is no food that can target specific areas of weight loss in the body. MUFA is more calorie-dense than proteins and carbohydrates, so excess intake can lead to weight gain. If you wish to try the diet, the exercise is definitely recommended. You would need to take note of how much MUFA you're consuming to ensure a controlled intake and avoid over-indulgence.

