

eDiets: A Variety of Diet Choices

Marlie Pykelny

Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin

Abstract

eDiets is an online diet program that offers different plans for dieting. After the consumer fills out an analysis and enters credit card information, the program begins with recipes and menus. The advantage claimed for this diet is that it is customized for the individual, allowing the choice of which diet and what menus are preferred. The catch is that one must first register to receive any information—there is no option for examining the diets without pre-registration payment. Commercial Internet sources had good reviews, stating that consumers have lost some amount of weight. However, those sources provide no peer-reviewed citations, and may be simply deceptive advertising.

Introduction

eDiets is an online weight loss program that began over ten years ago, and is now the “largest weight loss program” with over 1.3 million participants⁶. According to diets-reviewed.com, “eDiets content is so good other websites and health portals license it”⁸. Other reviews claim it to be “the best online diet program”⁴. eDiets started with their own diet plan, the eDiets Weight Loss Diet, and have slowly added a variety of other diet types (over 20)¹. Some examples of those other diet programs that you can register for are: Atkins Nutritional Approach, Heart Smart Diet, Blood Type Diet, and more⁶. You can pick which diet program you would like, or you have the option to take the an online analysis (called the Needs Analysis survey) to see which diet is best for you, depending on your body type and weight loss goal. There are so many options that no one will be at a loss for which diet to pick. eDiets’ claim is that you “end up with the Perfect Diet—one ideally suited for you”¹.

On www.smartdiets.info, consumers begin by selecting a diet that they prefer, and they can change this at any time during their membership¹. Then, after answering less than 10 questions, they must enter their credit card information to continue. The starting price is \$17.96 for 28 days². For this price, the consumer receives menus, recipes, "expert support" options, and even a fitness plan! The site claims these customized meal plans meet dietary guidelines and offer lots of choices¹. It is the “combination of nutrition and food choices [that] makes [eDiets] a good choice if you need help organizing your eating plans”⁶.

No matter which eDiets program you choose, the focus is on bettering long-term eating habits and increasing exercise⁷. According to www.thedietchannel.com, the diet is “about what one can eat” and “healthy choices are always encouraged”⁷. This is backed up by the Nutrition Data website: “to successfully lose weight, you need to make permanent changes in your lifestyle”¹⁰.

Method

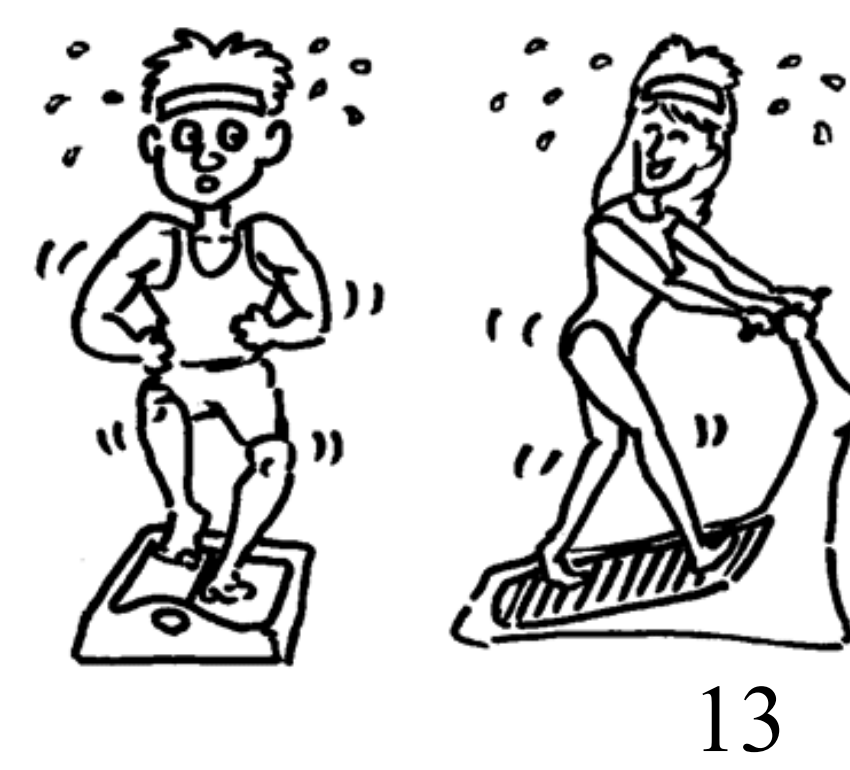
I searched on the Internet for reliable sources that are either consumer websites or peer-reviewed websites. Although it was hard, I did find references that gave information about this diet program.

Table 2 from ezinearticles.com

Suggestions for Evaluating a Diet Program	Applies to eDiets?
1. Is an all-natural solution?	Yes, no supplements or drugs.
2. Is recommended by other dieters?	Unknown, but has been by other websites.
3. Does not require a severe reduction in caloric intake?	Yes, but does depend on which program is chosen.
4. Does not require you to subscribe to a service?	No, the program is a service.
5. Allows you to continue to eat wherever you want?	Yes, for the most part

Table 1: eDiets Diet Plan Rating 6/07 from ConsumerReports.org

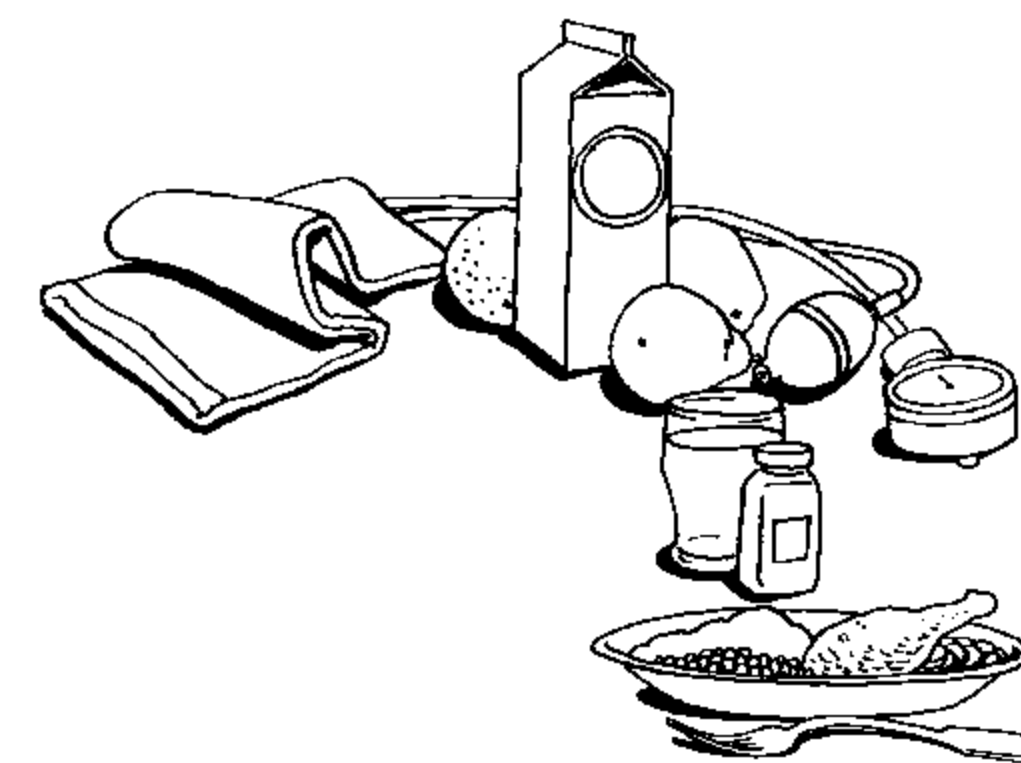
Rating		Percent of calories	
Overall score.....	4	Fat.....	23
Study Results		Saturated fat.....	5
Short term		Carbohydrates.....	53
Weight loss.....	2	Protein.....	24
Dropout rate.....	3	Fiber, g/1,000 cal.	19
1 year		Fruits & veg., daily serv..	12
Weight loss.....	2	Average daily calories.....	1450
Dropout rate.....	3		
Nutrition analysis...	5		
(5=Better --> 1=Worse)			



13



12



14



15

Results

It was hard to find research on the results of eDiets. eDiets website cannot be accessed without registering for a diet program, i.e. entering a credit card. So, to find information, I had to find a way to get around paying \$17.96 personally. While doing my research, I found a website with information about eDiets Corporate Services⁵. Listed on this website, I found the email address for the Vice President, Lynn Freck.

On this website, it says “Contact us for a Free Demo”⁵. I sent an email, on Monday, October 8, 2007, to the Vice President explaining that I was a student at Beloit College, and was wondering if she could possibly give me a free demo of this diet for my research project. She still has not sent me an email back. Therefore, I must analyze this diet using the information that I have found elsewhere, information that is missing pieces.

My comments are based primarily on my evaluation and other websites. eDiets does not give the consumer any information before they have committed for the first 28 days for \$17.96. If you cancel within the first 28-day cycle, you are charged an additional \$25.00². The Consumer Reports website reports that eDiets’s “customized plans are appealing, especially for those with wheat or lactose intolerances, but clinical studies find average adherence and below-average weight loss”³. Another problem with eDiets, as stated on Consumer Search, is that the website is “not up-front about additional fees”⁴.

Discussion

eDiets is unappealing without more information before they require a credit card. Also, I find the cancellation fee to be suspicious. There must be more effective ways to encourage staying on a diet.

I attribute the “average adherence” found by Consumer Reports to indicate that not many people are consistent in following this diet, and it is average³. Given the many people on diets and the rapid increase in obesity worldwide, “average” is a poor recommendation for a diet.

I can also imagine people “fudging” how much weight they lost. This would be possible because there is no one there to prove how much was actually lost.

Based on the “five criteria to use when selecting the best plan” shown in Table 2, eDiets does not fulfill all five⁹. There are no supplements or drugs as part of the program, and it has been recommended by various other websites. The other suggestions, numbers 3 and 5, depend on which diet program the consumer picks. And finally, eDiets is in fact a service.

Overall, I found many positive reviews about eDiets: no website seems to prove that consumers are successful, but there are some consumers who lost weight with this diet program. Reaching a conclusion about eDiets based only on commercial reports could be hazardous for both health and expenses.

References

- Information
- Smart Diets (n.d.). *Diet Plans*. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from <http://www.smartdiets.info/coupons/ediets.html>.
 - eDiets (n.d.). *Terms and Conditions of Use/Service Agreement*. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from <https://www.ediets.com/start2.cfm>.
 - Consumer Reports (June 2007). *Diet Plans: What the Studies Say*. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/health-fitness/Diets-607/ratings/diet-plan-ratings/0607_diets_plan.htm.
 - Consumer Search (n.d.). *Weight Loss Programs Reviews: eDiets.com*. Retrieved September 20, 2007 from http://www.consumersearch.com/www/health_and_fitness/weight-loss-programs/.
 - eDiets Corporate Services (n.d.) *Contact Us*. Retrieved October 8, 2007 from http://www.edietscorporateservices.com/contact_us.html.
 - Every Diet (n.d.). *eDiets*. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from <http://www.everydiet.org/ediets.htm>.
 - The Diet Channel (n.d.). *eDiets Weight Loss Plan*. September 20, 2007, from <http://www.thedietchannel.com/eDiets.htm>.
 - Diets-Reviewed.com: Health & Diet Plan Information (n.d.). *eDiets – e Diets Online Diet Plan*. Retrieved September 30, 2007, from <http://www.diets-reviewed.com/ediets.html>.
 - Ezine @rticles (n.d.). *The Best Diet Plan to Lose Weight – 5 Criteria*. Retrieved September 30, 2007, from <http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Best-Diet-Plan-to-Lose-Weight-5-Criteria&id=748235>.
 - NutritionData (n.d.). *Summary of Weight Loss Secrets*. Retrieved September 30, 2007, from <http://www.nutritiondata.com/topics/dieting-weight-loss#facts>.

Pictures

- eDiets logo: <http://diet.relevant-results.com/images/ediets-logo.jpg>
- Water Bottle: http://www.waterforliving.com/waterbottle_800x6002.jpg
- Exercise: <http://www.reinventionone.com/images/email/exercise.gif>
- Food: http://www.wplipart.com/medical/healthy_food.png
- Scale: <http://www.robbinsports.com/sporting-goods-store/images/deluxe-fitness-wrestling-weight-scale.jpg>