

4 Dangerous Weight Loss Methods

By Emily Battaglia, LifeScript Staff Writer

Most of us know that losing weight the healthy way should be a gradual process and takes a lifetime commitment to health. But some people aren't satisfied with this answer for weight loss, and they take extreme measures to become thin too quickly and too dangerously. While extreme dieters may lose weight, they can also lose their life. Stay away from the following 4 dangerous weight loss methods. Plus: Could you have an eating disorder?

The desire or pressure to [lose weight](#) for many women is so great that they're willing to compromise their health in the process. But extreme dieters who use any of these four dangerous methods will find that there are no guarantees for weight loss. In fact, the only guarantee is that they're complicating matters by compromising their health.

1. Diuretics

Diuretics, or water pills, are classified as drugs that increase the production and discharge of urine. They don't make you lose real weight – just water. In response to the excessive water loss from the diuretics, the body will begin to retain water after a few days. This triggers an ugly cycle of diuretic use since users take more pills to get rid of this water weight.

Dehydration is the most common side effect of using diuretics. Serious dehydration can turn into a life-threatening condition. The only thing diuretic users lose is vital fluids and electrolytes, which are necessary for proper heart, kidney and liver function, as well as other important minerals, like zinc.

2. Laxatives

Laxatives empty the large bowel, which has little effect on actual [weight](#) loss. The reason for this is because the food and calories that you consume have already been absorbed in the small intestine by the time the laxatives begin to work.

Like diuretics, the only difference in weight is the loss of water weight, even though you may feel thinner. Eventually you'll start retaining water, making you look and feel bloated, and this begins the cycle of continued laxatives use in a desperate attempt to combat water retention.

Repeated use of laxatives can cause unpleasant side effects. Users tend to find that after awhile they can't have a bowel movement without using a laxative. Your bowels become permanently damaged, and in extreme cases, death can result. Electrolyte imbalance, dehydration, constipation, bloody diarrhea, severe abdominal pain, nausea, and vomiting are also common side effects. Getting off of regular laxative use usually requires the help of a doctor.

3. Ipecac Syrup

Those who are familiar with medicine know that ipecac syrup is used to induce vomiting for poisonings. Bulimic women are often familiar with ipecac syrup because they use it induce vomiting too. Sadly, bulimics have died from using it on a regular basis. Ipecac syrup causes systemic toxicity, while emetine, its [active](#) ingredient, builds up in the tissue and weakens the heart, causing irregular heart beats, chest pains, breathing problems, rapid heart beat, cardiac arrest, seizures, shock, and coma.

4. Diet Pills

Diet pills are a huge industry in the U.S. and continue to be one of the most popular attempts at weight loss (think Phen/Fen and TrimSpa). Some diet pills are prescribed by doctors (such as Meridia and Xenical) and others can be obtained over-the-counter (which is then classified as dietary supplements rather than diet pills). Prescription diet pills are given to obese people because they're very effective in stimulating weight loss; their ingredients are stronger because they're regulated by the FDA and are taken under medical supervision. But dependency on over-the-counter diet pills or self-proclaimed diet pills can be dangerous. Diet pills come in the forms of appetite suppressants, caffeine pills and herbal supplements. Some are combinations of two or more of these.

For example, Phenylpropanolamine and Ephedra are popular appetite suppressants. They stimulate the nervous system, producing amphetamine-like reactions. Some of dangerous side effects diet pills include: nervousness, high blood pressure, insomnia, hyperactivity, fatigue, dizziness, heart arrhythmias and palpitations, [headaches](#), vomiting, dry mouth, heart attack, stroke, blurred vision, fever, urinary tract infection, hair loss, decreased sex drive, tightness in chest, tingling in extremities, and unhealthy bowel movements. More seriously, overdosing on diet pills or using them regularly can kill you.

It may seem like people who use these dangerous [weight loss](#) methods do succeed, but remember that it is a hazardous route. Keep in mind that any permanent weight loss may actually be due to using these methods in combination with other methods, such as lowering daily caloric intake or increasing exercise. So this begs the question – why not just lose weight the old-fashioned way – by eating healthy and exercising – if it's what's really behind successful weight loss?

We urge you to seek medical help if you have ever used or currently use any of these dangerous weight loss methods or if you know someone who has.

Compromising your health to be thin is never worth the risks.