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Style Publishing Group
P.O. Box 1676
Frisco, Texas 75034
Phone: 972.335.1181
Toll Free: 877.781.7067
Fax: 214.722.2313
E-mail: info@friscostyle.com
Web: www.friscostyle.com

Ad Sales: (972) 335-1306



the costs of those new year's resolutions

by jackie beynaerts

I refuse to admit to finishing off the Halloween candy before the trick-or-treaters had a chance to ring my doorbell. Nor will I claim to be the one that had all the pumpkin pie leftovers after Thanksgiving. Christmas, don't even get me started on denying the eggnog, candy canes, fruit cakes, and other mouthwatering dishes that came my way. I may very well live in a state of denial, but when New Year's Eve comes around I proudly make my plans for renewal, starting with the dreaded Resolution List. Unlike my friends who have since learned that making something your New Year's Resolution is the fastest way not to achieve that goal, I fall for it every year. From dropping those pesky pounds to indulging in some much needed pampering, if it can benefit me, it's probably been on my list. This year is no different, and as my list gets longer, so does my curiosity about the hidden dangers lurking behind my well-intended plans of renewal.

RESOLUTION #1: NO MATTER WHAT, I WILL FINALLY LOSE THAT EXTRA WEIGHT!

Before you stoop to just any weight loss plan, and there are some scary ones out there, know that manufacturers don't exactly have your health or best interests at heart. Regardless of the results you'd like to see, they want to see a profit. These over-the-counter diet pills may seem safe, but in reality can cause permanent damage and even death. For example, a few of the side

effects of Metabolife diet pills have been documented on EphedraLawyerInformation.com as seizures, heart attacks, strokes, high blood pressure, even death. Another popular diet pill, Body Solutions Evening Weight Loss Formula is being sued by the FTC for obtaining \$190 million dollars primarily from making false claims through deceptive radio advertisement. In fact more than 650 radio stations in 110 cities nationwide claimed that without dieting or exercise you could affectively lose weight. Don't be fooled by so-called testimonials. Consult your doctor before taking any kind of diet pill, and know that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration in December banned one such "too good to be true" product when they struck ephedra products from store shelves. Used for more than 5,000 years in traditional Chinese medicines, ephedra has more recently been promoted as an energy-booster, weight-loss supplement and athletic performance enhancer. These products usually also contained caffeine and the combination of ephedra and caffeine increased the chances of adverse side effects dramatically. Now that ephedra has been banned look for replacement products containing equally as harmful ingredients. Green tea extract and the herb bitter orange both are stimulants that can lead to tremors, seizures heart attacks, strokes and possibly death.

The active ingredient in bitter orange, synephrine, is chemically very similar to ephedra and also raises blood pressure and increases heart rates. Green tea, although healthy by itself and full of antioxidants, can worsen the effects of synephrine when consumed in large quantities.

While these newer alternatives have undergone far fewer tests than ephedra, the FDA said they were aware of the chemical compounds and that by taking action on ephedra the government regulators were able to establish a framework to deal with other potentially dangerous supplements.





**RESOLUTION #2:
I WILL LOSE WEIGHT THE
“HEALTHY” WAY BY CHANGING
MY DIET.**

So what about the latest diets like Dr. Atkin’s Diet and South Beach Diet? Both have hit the scene with amazing claims. The South Beach Diet declares you can lose up to 11 lbs. in just two weeks. Yet the FTC states that the faster you lose weight, the more likely you are to gain it back, while experts recommend a goal of only a pound a week.

Furthermore some doctors warn that low carb diets can cause high cholesterol, kidney damage, increased risk of a heart attack, the list goes on. So what’s a dieter in search of an effective, permanent weight loss plan to do? Because there is such controversy in research, be on the safe side and again consult your doctor before starting any new diet. He can give you a physical, keep tabs on your cholesterol and develop a comprehensive, effective weight loss program suited to you.

**RESOLUTION #3:
I WILL INVEST IN A TRAINER.**

Forget fad diets, diet pills and low carbs. I’m going to do it right with exercise and a personal trainer who can pave the road to success! But wait, before dropping anywhere from \$50-\$100 an hour on a trainer who may not even be qualified, know what to look for. The name “certified trainer” is used very loosely, and some certificates do not require hands-on training. With the wrong trainer you could waste time, money and seriously hurt yourself doing exercises improperly. If your trainer pushes you too hard or has set unattainable goals, it’s best to keep looking. Also, a trainer should never suggest weight loss supplements that are usually sold in gyms. IVillage.com recommends choosing a personal trainer that is certified in at least one of the following: American Council on Exercise, American College of Sports Medicine, or the National Strength and Conditioning Association. These three are widely accepted as the most professional and trustworthy certifying organizations.

All this talk of cyber this and that begs the question, how about an online personal trainer? It makes perfect sense for the intermediate and advanced exerciser or athlete. Someone with very specific goals such as training for a marathon or triathlon can spend



a fraction of the cost of a hands-on personal trainer. This method of training is attractive to anyone with a computer and modem who may be in a remote location or traveling on a regular basis.

The hidden dangers in this process can be in selection of the properly trained and qualified individual. Some tips for choosing an on-line personal trainer include making sure the personal trainer has a college degree in an exercise-related field and/or is certified by a well-known organization such as the American College of Sports Medicine. Make sure the site is easy to navigate. If it’s not you probably won’t stick with your training. Look for sample workout plans to again avoid injury or unattainable goals. The site should also have a method for visually communicating the proper exercise technique. Easy contact with your trainer via email or phone is also critical. If offered a bulletin board-type chat room will encourage a support network.



**RESOLUTION #4:
I WILL TAKE TIME FOR MYSELF WITH A LITTLE
PAMPERING.**

Before you hit the salon for tips, a manicure or a pedicure, beware! From used tools to dirty pedicure whirlpools, there are hidden dangers everywhere. Skin infections like a virus, fungus; staph infections even herpes could be transmitted from a simple pedicure. Some infections, even after being treated, can leave deep purple scars that require skin grafts or laser surgery to get rid of, while others like Hepatitis C and HIV are deadly. Barbara Walters in a 20/20 investigation found many manicure stations across the US, including Dallas, had potentially harmful bacteria. The 20/20 Investigation suggests protecting yourself by bringing your own tools.

Also, make sure the salon and the technician both have a license. Finally, a new set of unused disposable files should be used on each client, and foot spas or pedicure baths should be washed and disinfected after each use. Before you decide to pamper yourself with some pretty polish, make sure the only thing you walk away with is fresh paint.

This year get excited about making positive changes in your life. It’s an exhilarating feeling thinking about all the good you can do with a few changes. Just beware of the hidden dangers lurking in those good intentions.

Jackie Beynaerts is a freelance writer from Frisco.