



Beware of sudden, extreme regimes

TV shows spark weight warning



WHILE popular television weight-loss shows inspire viewers to shed excess kilos, experts are cautioning against sudden, extreme regimens.

The verdict appears to be that *Excess Baggage* may have the edge over *The Biggest Loser* in showcasing a more rounded approach.

The Australian Medical Association warns engaging in extreme physical activity unsupervised may increase the risk of heart attacks and falls.

President Dr Steve Hambleton said the shows inspired people to lose weight, showing it was possible via changes to diet and exercise.

However, people should make slow, steady and sustainable changes, aiming to lose up to 2kg to 3kg a month, he said.

"The unusual way these programs go about weight loss is not suitable for the general public, not without risks," he said.

"The average overweight person ... may have diabetes, coronary artery disease or osteoarthritis and may not be suitable for an intense program."

Nutrition and fitness expert

Donna Aston said *Excess Baggage* had a bigger focus on nutrition and the psychology of weight loss.

"It's hard to sustain weight loss without changing our mindset," she said.

Excess Baggage contestants also had their body composition measured to indicate if muscle, water or fat had been lost, rather than just total weight loss, Ms Aston said.

Those to lose weight quickly often shed muscle, which slowed the metabolism and made it more difficult to keep the kilos off long-term, she said.

Dietitian Jemma O'Hanlon said *Excess Baggage* took a more realistic approach to weight loss by not counting kilojoules or dictating diets.

"It's a much more educational process, teaching them to make lifestyle changes," she said.

Obesity Policy Coalition senior adviser Jane Martin said shows tended to remove people from a real-life environment.

"It's like weight-loss rehab, but people are then coming out into an obesogenic environment, which is going to undermine them." Ms Martin said.



STRUGGLE: Wayne Carey encourages Biggest Loser contestant Ryan Preuss