

10 Nutrition and Healthy Eating Myths

We bust some common nutrition myths and ways for weight management!

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Ever heard of the saying "don't believe everything you read"? Well, in some cases it should also be "don't believe everything you hear". Especially when it comes to nutrition, where everyone has a different opinion.

There are so many mixed messages out there that it's difficult to figure out which advice to follow when it comes to healthy eating. Commercials tell you one thing, friends tell you the opposite, your parents advise you what they were told when they were kids, and doctors recommend against most of what you've heard.

So how do you make sense of all this? Are all fats and sugars bad? Are all "fat-free products" as healthy as they claim to be? Is it ever OK to skip meals?

We bust the Top 10 nutrition myths. Share this!

Nutrition Myths and Facts



1. Meal timing myth: Eating most of my calories in the evening will cause weight gain

Fact: Calories are calories. It doesn't really matter when you eat them, since it's been proven that your body doesn't process food differently at different times of the day. What does matter, however, are the total calories you take in versus the ones that you burn off. Mindlessly snacking in front of the TV at night can and does increase your calorie intake without you even noticing.

If you must snack, do try healthier options such as fresh fruits, unsweetened dried fruits, low-fat yoghurt and milk. Whether at night while watching a movie, or in between meals, snacking is not a crime. But overeating unhealthy foods while sitting down comes down to not paying attention to your body.

2. Nutrition myth: "Fat-free" means "calorie-free", which means I can eat as much as I want

Fact: "Low fat" or "fat-free" does NOT mean "calorie-free". A low-fat or fat-free food is OFTEN lower in calories than the same size portion of the full-fat product. But many processed foods that are low-fat or fat-free could have just as many calories as the full-fat version of the same food - sometimes even MORE calories. This is because the process that takes fat out of foods involves adding sugar, flour, starch thickeners, and other carbohydrates to keep the original taste.

When grocery shopping, make sure you read nutrition labels of the regular versus the low-fat versions of the product and compare both their caloric content and their fat content, based on per 100g serving size.

Alternatively, you can look out for the Healthier Choice Symbol logo to identify food products that are healthier options. Remember that body weight comes down to calories! Also, if a food is lower in fat and calories, that doesn't mean you should eat unreasonable quantities of it. Eat all foods in moderation, especially ones with excess fats.

3. Myth about carbohydrates: Carbohydrates (and sugars) are evil because they cause weight gain

Fact: Carbohydrates, much like protein and fat, do not cause weight gain. Eating more than you require is likely to result in weight gain. Indulging in sugary and refined carbohydrate-rich foods (white bread, pasta, and doughnuts) can raise your risk of developing health problems like heart disease and diabetes.

The surest bet is to follow the [My Healthy Plate](#) for balanced nutrients intake: wholegrains, beans, fruits and vegetables are all "good-carb" foods, while intake of refined sugar and sweet foods should be limited to the strictest minimum.

4. Healthy eating myth: Eating mostly salads and greens will help me maintain a healthy weight

Fact: It's true that salad and green vegetables are low energy density, meaning that they are very low in energy with almost zero fat content. Diets rich in salads and greens provide essential vitamins and minerals, fibre, and other substances that are important for good health.

When choosing to go with a salad, make sure you don't cancel out its healthiness by drowning it in salad dressing and sauces that are high in fat. Don't overdo it and add calories to the salad.

5. Weight loss myth: I can burn fat by eating certain foods, like grapefruit and cabbage soup

Fact: No foods can burn fat. Fad diets such as the grapefruit diet require you to eat half a grapefruit at every meal with protein foods to reap the benefits of the fruit's so-called fat-burning enzymes for weight loss. But while grapefruit has no fat, is low in calories and sodium, and is packed with vitamin C and fibre, it does not make you burn fat. Similarly, the cabbage soup diet leads people to deficiencies (lack of a variety of vitamins and proteins) and may make you dangerously undernourished and will affect your immune system.

The best way to get to a healthier weight is to eat meals that are balanced and varied while limiting foods high in fat, oil and sugar. Don't forget to increase your physical activities too. Getting friends to join you in sports activities are a great way to be active and fun.

6. Food myth debunked: Eggs are bad for my heart

Fact: Eggs contain a substantial amount of cholesterol in their yolks - about 134 milligrams (mg) per large egg. Cholesterol is the fatty stuff in our blood that contributes to clogged arteries and heart attacks. But labelling eggs as "bad for your heart" is connecting the wrong dots. Most healthy people can eat an egg a day without problems since the body simply compensates the cholesterol intake by manufacturing less cholesterol itself. The chief heart-disease culprits are saturated and trans fats, which have a much greater impact on raising blood cholesterol, especially in people prone to such conditions (family history of high cholesterol, for example).

Just because you're young and healthy doesn't mean you should be eating three-egg omelettes every morning. Your daily cholesterol intake should be less than 300 mg.

7. Myth people believe in: Microwaving is bad for food and is dangerous to my health

Fact: Various methods of cooking affect the food you're eating. Whether you're using a microwave, a charcoal grill, a fryer, or a solar-heated stove, the heat and the amount of time you're cooking affect the food. The longer and hotter you cook a fish, the more you'll lose certain heat- and water-sensitive nutrients, especially vitamin C and thiamin (a B vitamin). In fact, because microwave cooking often cooks foods more quickly, it can actually help to minimise nutrient losses.

Microwave ovens are devices in which energy travels in waves of heat that spread out as they go, that heats up the food from within. Microwaves, much like radio waves and energy waves, are very low-intensity forms of radiation (unlike X-rays and gamma rays, which do pose health concerns). Be aware, however, that some plastic containers that we use to microwave our food are not meant for microwaving, and may lead to plastic compounds being passed onto your food. Which is why you should only use microwave-safe containers.

8. Skipping meals myth: Skipping meals or having various smaller meals is good for my metabolism

Fact: Every time you eat, you jump-start your metabolism, since your body tries to process what you've consumed. Having various mini-meals throughout the day instead of fewer, larger ones make your metabolism shift into a higher gear more often - and burns a few more calories.

On the other hand, fasting or consuming only liquids does not help your body eliminate excess fats or toxins. In fact, skipping meals (usually breakfast) does not mean weight loss. Studies show that people who skip breakfast and eat fewer times during the day tend to be heavier than people who eat a healthy breakfast and eat four or five times a day. This is because skipping a meal makes you feel hungrier and pushes you to overeat at the next meal and pays less attention to your satiety cues.

The best bet is to eat well-balanced, well-timed, and well-proportioned meals with fruits and vegetables that best fit your body's needs and requirements.

9. Myth About Fat: All fats are bad for me

Fact: There are many different types of fats. Some of them are an essential part of your diet, others should be completely banned from your shopping cart. Unsaturated fats, for example, may protect our health by decreasing the low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol in the blood. Saturated fats from meat and dairy products have been shown to raise total and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. Meanwhile, trans fats, not only raise total and LDL (bad) cholesterol but also lower High-density lipoprotein (good) cholesterol. Trans fats lurk in all kinds of processed foods, from French fries to cookies. Overall, some fats impact your health positively while others increase your risk for heart disease. The key is to replace bad fats with good fats in our diet.

Just remember that healthy fats allow the body to function normally and are a source of energy. But you should limit your fat intake to no more than 25-30% of daily calories. In general, you should choose low-fat dairy products and lean cuts of meat and poultry or remove visible fats. You should include fish (including fatty fish such as salmon) in your diet and keep processed food and fast foods to an absolute minimum.

10. Nutrition myth: Brown sugar is better than white sugar

Fact: There is virtually no nutritional difference between brown and white sugar. In fact, brown sugar is actually white granulated sugar with added molasses. Brown sugar does contain extremely small amounts of minerals, but unless you eat a gigantic portion of brown sugar every day, the mineral content difference between brown sugar and white sugar is absolutely insignificant.

Remember that the idea that brown sugar is a healthier option than white sugar is mostly due to clever marketing. Similarly, so-called "diet" sodas may not be ideal for health as they may contain non-essential additives such as caffeine, artificial sweeteners, sodium, and phosphoric acid. Also, many foods (fruits, honey, milk) already contain other types of sugars that are well processed and used by your body. Be particularly careful with your sugar intake if there is a history of diabetes in your family.

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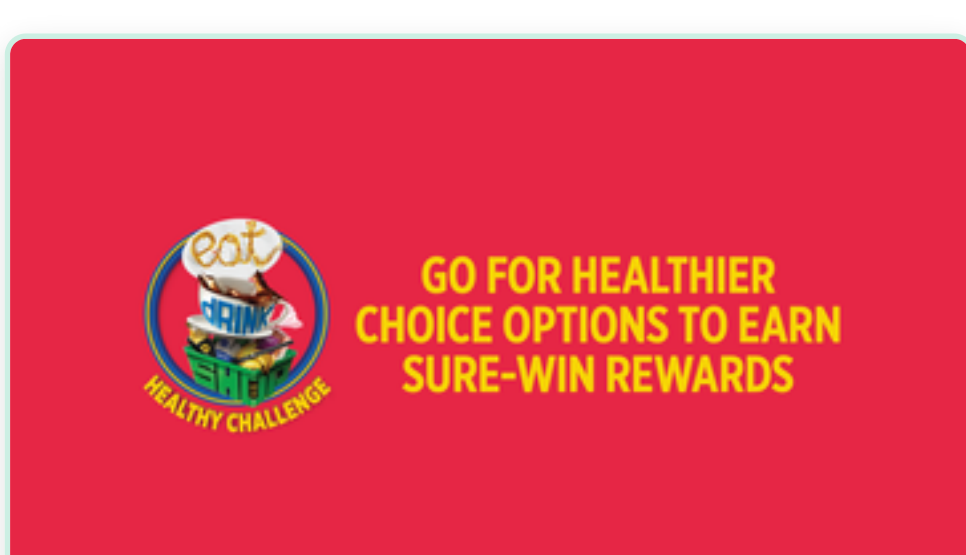
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