

25 Common Food & Nutrition Myths

Myth 1: Your stomach will shrink if you eat less.

FACT: The only way to physically shrink your stomach is through surgical procedures. Your stomach expands to accommodate the amount of food that you eat and goes back to its original size once the food passes on to the intestines. The only effect cutting down on the amount of food will have on your stomach is your appetite but not the size of the stomach itself.

Myth 2: Snacks will spoil your appetite.

FACT: Eating a moderately sized snack a few hours (2-3 hrs) before meal time will not destroy your appetite. Snacking a little before your main meals will actually help you curb your hunger so that you don't overeat during the main meals of the day.

Myth 3: Snacking makes you fat.

FACT: Snacks do not necessarily have to be bad for you and can play a key role in weight loss. The key to snacking is to avoid things that are high in fat and calories and go for things that help you fulfill your Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA) for each of the food groups in a day.

Myth 4: Vegetarian diets are always lower in fat and calories.

FACT: Vegetarian diets can be very healthy and low in fat and calories when they are carefully planned. However, there are many things that can be included in the vegetarian diet that contain just as much fat and calories as non-vegetarian diets. Some examples are fried foods, salad dressings, candies, oils, canned foods, and sometimes cheeses.

Myth 5: Getting the recommended daily servings of vegetables is impossible.

FACT: The recommended daily allowance (RDA) of vegetables varies depending on a person's age, activity level, and gender. Although, the general recommendation is that everyone get at least 5 full servings of vegetable each day no matter their age, activity level, or gender. There is a misconception of what one serving is considered, one serving of vegetables is ½ cup unless it is leafy vegetables then it is 1 cup. The easiest way to get your 5 servings a day is to incorporate vegetables into every meal you have and use them for snacks as well. Five may seem like a lot of servings but they will go by fast if you put them in each meal and some snacks as well.

Myth 6: Bananas are fattening.

FACT: There are many nutritious aspects to eating bananas and they do not contain that many calories. One medium sized banana is equal to only 105 calories and you would have to consume six of them to equal one slice of New York-style pizza. Bananas are a good source of: fiber, magnesium, potassium, and vitamin B6, all of which help your blood pressure and immune system.

Myth 7: Zero Trans fat means zero.

FACT: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allows manufacturers to label products as containing "0 trans fat" if there is less than 0.5 grams of trans fat present. Due to this you should read labels that claim to be free of trans fat carefully and look for the following things: hydrogenated margarines, hydrogenated, or partially hydrogenated; all of these things indicate that there is some trace of trans fat present.

Myth 8: All yogurts are healthy for you.

FACT: Yogurt can be a very healthy snack but you must watch out for yogurts that have sweeteners and things added to them. Most flavored yogurts contain things like: sugar, cream, corn starch, gelatin, aspartame, and sucralose (for sugar-free varieties). The reason that you don't want to have sugar added to your yogurt is that it feeds the growth of unwanted yeasts in the yogurt. Your best choice when it comes to yogurt is plain, all natural yogurt that contains such bacteria as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidobacterium bifidus*. If you want to add flavor to your yogurt try adding fresh fruits or nuts on top.

Myth 9: Iceberg lettuce is just as healthy as other greens.

FACT: Iceberg lettuce is made up of 95% water, and contains only small amounts of fiber, vitamins, and minerals compared to other leafy greens. If you want to eat iceberg lettuce then try mixing it with some other greens, like spinach, kale, or romaine, in order to get the best nutrients possible out of your salad. The thing to remember is that the darker the lettuce is the more nutritious it is.

Myth 10: Eating eggs will raise your cholesterol.

FACT: The reason that this is believed is because egg yolks contain more cholesterol than any other food. However, experts have stated that eating one egg each day will not cause an increase in your cholesterol levels. Eggs have been found to be a great source of nutrients when eaten in moderation.

Myth 11: Vitamin supplements are necessary for everyone.

FACT: If a person eats a well balanced diet full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, protein, and the right amount of calories there is no need for a vitamin supplement. The problem is that most people are not getting all the nutrients they need from their daily diet so a daily multi-vitamin may be suggested to make up for what the diet lacks. Also some individuals may be prescribed different vitamins and mineral due to certain conditions like pregnancy and nutritional disorders.

Myth 12: Fat free = calorie free.

FACT: Many would like to believe that just because something says it is fat-free that they can eat as much of it as they want, but what they are not realizing is that it may have just as many if not more calories than the regular version. It is very important to read nutrition labels in order to find the serving size and number of calories present in the food. Some fat-free foods add things like: sugar, flour, or starch thickeners in order to improve the flavor. These additives may cause you to gain even more weight than if you were to consume the normal versions because they have more calories.

Myth 13: Ketosis caused by high protein diets reduces hunger.

FACT: Ketosis is the process of the body burning fat as its main energy source because there are not enough carbohydrates available to burn. It is not the Ketosis that causes the loss of appetite, but an adequate amount of protein intake will help reduce one's hunger. Most of the weight lost on these diets is made up of water weight and lean muscle mass and is easily regained once the diet is stopped.

Myth 14: Exercise makes you eat more.

FACT: Research has shown that twenty minutes after exercise people ate no more than those who did nothing at all. The only difference that exercise has been found to have on food was that food is reported to taste better after exercise.

Myth 15: Extra protein makes you stronger.

FACT: The body has the ability to store great amounts of protein for later use. The idea that you must eat certain foods in order to get the right amount of protein for performance is unsound because a diet that includes both animal and vegetable proteins will replenish the stores as needed. Also, if you consume too much protein you cause your body to work extra hard in order to get rid of the excess which may cause distress.

Myth 16: Eating later in the evening causes weight gain.

FACT: The key is what and how much you are eating, not when you are eating it. In regards to weight gain and loss, it all depends on whether or not you are taking in more calories than you are burning off during the day. There is some evidence that eating at regular meal times may help to avoid indulgent snacking and overeating.

Myth 17: Fresh vegetables are better than frozen or canned ones.

FACT: Frozen and canned vegetables can actually be more nutritious than fresh ones. This is because the fresh vegetables spend a lot of time in processing and transit to the store, with varying conditions that cause them to lose nutrients before they hit the shelf of the supermarket. Frozen and canned vegetables are immediately taken from the

vine and put into their packaging and held at a steady temperature to maintain nutrients. The only difference between fresh and frozen or canned may come down to taste and additives, these are the things that you have to watch out for.

Myth 18: Carbohydrates make you fat.

FACT: Carbohydrates do not cause you to gain weight unless they are contributing to excess calorie intake. The only thing that matters in weight gain is taking in more calories than you burn in a day. Actually, carbohydrates are the body's main source of energy so the body needs them in order to function properly.

Myth 19: Desserts are bad for you and will ruin your diet.

FACT: There are NO bad foods or food groups that will cause your healthy diet to fail. The key is to watch the amount of certain foods that you allow in your diet. One or two moderately sized desserts a day has been found to be okay in maintaining a healthy diet.

Myth 20: Fad diets are safe and effective weight loss strategies.

FACT: Fad diets often promise unrealistic weight loss goals in a very short time by constricting calories or cutting out certain foods completely. They often do not allow a person to eat a balanced diet each day which may result in future health problems. Also, the rapid weight loss that most diets promise can produce health risks and is quickly regained once the diet is stopped because it is mostly water weight and lean muscle that is lost. For more information see our article on fad diets.

Myth 21: Eating sugar causes you to get diabetes.

FACT: Diabetes is caused by a lack of insulin absorption or production in the body, not by consumption of sugar and carbohydrates. Although, Diabetics do need to monitor how much sugar and carbohydrates that they ingest it will not cause the disease to form. The main causes of diabetes are obesity and inactivity, which sugar may attribute to but cannot be the sole cause of.

Myth 22: Skipping meals is a good way to lose weight.

FACT: Research has shown that people who skip meals (especially breakfast) and eat fewer times a day actually weight MORE than those who don't use these practices. The reason for these findings may be that the more time between meals a person allows the more hungry they are likely to get which may cause them to overeat at their next meal. Thus this may suggest that by eating many small meals throughout the day, you may be able to better control your appetite and eat less at each setting.

Myth 23: Dairy products are fattening and unhealthy.

FACT: There are low-fat and fat-free dairy products that are just as nutritious as the whole milk products. These low-fat and fat-free dairy products should be an important part of your daily diet in order to supply your body with the many nutrients that they contain. Dairy products are a great source of calcium, protein, and vitamin D which all play various roles in how our bodies function.

Myth 24: All fats are bad for you.

FACT: The truth is that our bodies need fat in order to perform many of its functions: nutrient absorption, nerve transmission, and maintaining cell membranes. Fat becomes problematic for the body when it is consumed in excess and the wrong type of fat is consumed. Ideally only 20-30% of your daily calories should come from fat and that should consist of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats not saturated fats. When you consume the right types of fat in the right amounts there are actually health benefits that may result.

Myth 25: Low-calorie sweeteners increase your risk of cancer and promote weight gain.

FACT: There is no scientific research to back up the claim that artificial sweeteners are linked to an increased risk of cancer. Likewise, there is no research that has proved that these sweeteners cause people to gain more weight. The opposite may actually be true; when artificial sweeteners are used instead of sugar you may actually lose weight as a result.

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