

Nutrition Mythbusters



Myth #1: Don't eat after 8 p.m. if you are trying to lose weight.

Truth: In the end, it's about calories in and calories out. Skipping dinner because it's "too late" will probably backfire and prompt you to eat more the next day.

Myth #2: Enjoy all the chocolate you want – it's good for you!

Truth: Unfortunately, the milk chocolate we tend to grab when we get a craving isn't the chocolate that will help your heart. It's the really dark, bitter chocolate with a high percentage of cocoa that gives us the antioxidant benefits.

Myth #3: Sugar causes diabetes.

Truth: Simply eating sugar does not cause diabetes. If you have diabetes, you do need to watch your sugar and carbohydrate intake. The main risk factors for Type 2 diabetes are being overweight and inactive.

Myth #4: Organic foods are healthier than conventional foods.

Truth: There is no consensus that organic food is healthier than conventionally grown food. Organic foods can still contain natural pesticides and are often more expensive.

Myth #5: A high protein/low carbohydrate diet is a healthy way to lose weight.

Truth: This type of diet is usually high in saturated fat and cholesterol, low in fiber, and can lead to a buildup of ketones – all of which may cause serious health problems. Most importantly, this diet is not maintainable, so lose weight doing something you can stick with!

Myth #6: Skipping meals is a good way to lose weight.

Truth: Research shows that people who skip breakfast and eat fewer times during the day tend to consume more calories and be heavier than people who don't. Eating throughout the day helps you control your appetite and prevents overeating.

Myth #7: “Reduced fat,” “low fat,” and “nonfat,” foods have fewer calories.

Truth: These foods often have added sugar, flour, or starch thickeners – all of which add calories. Always compare the original to the modified version to see if you will save anything. And don’t get tricked into eating more just because it is lower fat!

Myth #8: All fats are bad for you. **Truth:** All fats are high in calories, so they need to be limited to control calories. But unlike saturated fats that contribute to heart disease, unsaturated fats can actually help you prevent heart disease. Excellent sources include olive and canola oils, nuts, seeds, and avocados.

Myth #9: As long as you watch your food intake, you do not need to exercise.

Truth: Research shows that 90% of people who lose weight and keep it off engage in regular exercise. In addition, exercise helps preserve muscle mass and has many health benefits.

Myth #10: Vitamin supplements provide everything you need to maintain good health.

Truth: Vitamins will not make up for a poor diet but they can serve as an “insurance policy” in case you have any nutritional gaps. We haven’t come close to identifying all the healthful phytochemicals in food, so you definitely can’t get all the benefits of food in a pill!

Myth #11: Items bought in health food stores are better for me.

Truth: These items usually cost more and offer no greater nutritional value than foods in the supermarket. Your best bet is to eat a diet with little processed food and that is rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.

Myth #12: Honey is better than table sugar because it is natural.

Truth: Honey and table sugar are almost chemically indistinguishable. Spoon for spoon, sugar contains fewer calories than honey, but extra calories from either one will lead to weight gain and offer no nutritional benefit.

Myth #13: “Cholesterol-free” means a product is heart healthy.

Truth: Cholesterol is important to consider for heart disease, but the bigger culprits are saturated fats and trans fats – both of which can be found in cholesterol-free products. Read labels and ingredient lists to get the real scoop on a product and avoid being fooled by misleading advertising.