

WEIGHT-LOSS AND NUTRITION MYTHS

“Lose 30 pounds in thirty days! Eat as much as you want and still lose weight!”

Have you heard these claims before? Nutrition misinformation is everywhere, and it can be hard to know what to believe. Many myths start from a single, less-than-credible source or shoddy science and spread so widely and quickly that they're often accepted as fact. Before you adopt the latest diet craze that promises quick results with little effort, be sure to separate fact from fiction.



Myth: Fad diets will help me lose weight and keep it off.

Fact: Fad diets promise quick weight loss by strictly reducing what you eat and eliminating some types of foods. These diets may help you lose weight at first, but they are difficult to follow and people tend to lose interest quickly and regain any lost weight.

Research suggests that safe weight loss involves combining a reduced-calorie diet with physical activity to lose 1/2 to 2 pounds per week. Make healthy food choices, eat small portions and build exercise into your daily life for a safe way to lose weight and keep it off.

Myth: Avoid carbohydrates to lose weight.

Fact: Carbohydrates do *not* cause weight gain. No matter what types of foods are eaten, if you decrease your caloric intake by 500 calories per day, you will lose 1 pound per week. The plan is simple — reduce the number of calories you take in and increase the amount of physical activity you do each day to achieve a 500-calorie deficit. Create and follow a healthy eating plan that replaces less healthy choices with a mix of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, protein and low-fat dairy. Limit added sugars, cholesterol, salt (sodium) and saturated fats.

Myth: If I skip meals, I can lose weight.

Fact: Skipping meals is *not* an effective way to lose weight. In fact, studies show a link between skipping breakfast and obesity. Skipping meals leads to hunger and causes you to eat more than you normally would at your next meal. Instead, choose regularly timed meals and snacks that include a variety of healthy foods.

- For a quick breakfast, make oatmeal with low-fat milk and top with fresh berries or eat a slice of whole-wheat toast with jam or jelly.
- Pack a healthy lunch each night so you won't be tempted to rely on the convenience of fast food.
- For healthy snacks, pack a small low-fat yogurt, a couple of whole-wheat crackers with peanut butter, or veggies with hummus.

Myth: Eating healthy food costs too much.

Fact: Eating better does *not* have to cost a lot of money. Many people think that fresh foods are healthier than canned or frozen. However, canned or frozen fruits and veggies provide as many nutrients as fresh ones, at a lower cost. Healthy options include low-salt canned veggies and fruit packed in its own juice or water. Remember to rinse canned veggies to remove excess salt. Also, some canned seafood, like tuna, is easy to keep on the shelf and costs less than fresh. Canned, dried or frozen beans, lentils and peas are also healthy



protein sources that are easy on the wallet. Check the nutrition facts on food labels and select those that are high in calcium, fiber, potassium, protein and vitamin D.

Myth: Eating meat is bad for my health and makes it harder to lose weight.

Fact: Eating lean meat in small amounts can be part of a healthy plan to lose weight. Chicken, fish, pork and red meat contain healthy nutrients, like iron, protein and zinc. Choose cuts of meat that are lower in fat and trim off the visible excess fat. Also watch portion size — limit your meat and poultry portions to 3 or fewer ounces, about the size of the palm of your hand or a deck of cards. Prepare meat by roasting, grilling or baking, rather than frying.



Myth: Dairy products are fattening and unhealthy.

Fact: Fat-free and low-fat cheese, milk and yogurt are just as healthy as whole-milk products and are lower in fat and calories. Dairy products offer protein to build muscles and help organs work well, and calcium to strengthen bones. Some milk and yogurts have extra vitamin D to help your body absorb and use calcium. Most Americans don't get enough calcium and vitamin D, and dairy is an easy way to get more of these essential nutrients. You should try to have three servings per day of fat-free or low-fat dairy. There are lactose-free or low-lactose dairy products for those who have difficulty digesting dairy.

Your health care provider is always your best resource for information on weight loss and dieting. Ask your doctor about your ideal weight and the number of calories you should consume for weight loss and weight maintenance. Also consult with your health care provider before you begin an exercise regimen. A registered dietitian can give you advice on a healthy eating plan and safe ways to lose weight and keep it off.

Don't forget to ask friends, family or coworkers to join you as you change your eating habits and strive to lose weight. Sticking to a weight-loss plan is much easier when you have people supporting you.

For Additional Information:

- Call a Blues On CallSM Health Coach at 1-888-BLUE-428 to speak to a Health Coach.
- Log in to your member website (found on the back of your insurance ID card) and click on the **Health & Wellness** tab. Select the **Healthy Living** link.