

Busting Nutrition Myths

MYTH: Being Overweight Is Unhealthy

REALITY: Based on the available evidence—and putting aside the fact that BMI is useless in measuring health—*people in the “overweight” BMI category have the lowest mortality rates.* In fact, people in the “underweight” BMI category have the second highest mortality rate. The fact is that there isn’t much difference in mortality rates from being “normal weight” to “obese 1” in terms of BMI categories. *Weight is simply not an appropriate measure of health* and trying to manipulate your body’s weight through dieting can lead to poor health outcomes.

MYTH: Diets Work

REALITY: 95% of people will regain the weight they lost when dieting, and then some. Additionally, *weight fluctuation is associated with an increased mortality rate.* Again, weight is not an appropriate measure of health. Unless you are prescribed a diet by a doctor to address a specific health concern, like a gluten-free diet to treat celiac disease, a diet is *never* a healthy option. If you feel like you have an unhealthy relationship with food, try “Intuitive Eating”.

MYTH: Carbs Are Bad

REALITY: *There is nothing harmful about carbs.* In fact, lots of fruits and vegetables are full of carbs. Needlessly cutting carbs actually deprives your body from a lot of essential nutrients. Also, if you hear anything about “low-glycemic index” foods as a justification for low-carb diets, please know that the research has repeatedly proved that the glycemic index does not meaningfully impact weight loss.

MYTH: White Bread Is Unhealthy

REALITY: Enriched wheat flour replaces most of the nutrients lost in the grain processing. Also, the fibre difference between white and whole grain breads is incredibly small. (If you want more fibre, eat more fruits and vegetables instead.) Whole grain bread is often more expensive than white bread, so *if white bread is what fits in your budget, try to buy an enriched product and know that you’re not harming your family by feeding it to them.*

MYTH: Dietary Supplements Are Necessary

REALITY: *You can get all of the nutrients you need by eating a balanced diet.* Many supplements aren’t absorbed as effectively (if at all) as regular food is anyways. Unless your doctor (not naturopath) has prescribed specific supplements to address a health concern, they are likely passing through your system with little benefit.

MYTH: Fresh Produce Is More Nutritious

REALITY: *There is no difference between fresh and frozen produce.* Some canned foods can lose nutrients to the solution (liquid) that they are preserved in and can have added sodium for flavour, so do be wary when buying canned food to choose the no-salt options.

MYTH: Foods Labeled Natural or Organic Are Healthier

REALITY: *These labels are not regulated and are mainly an excuse to charge more.* If you're worried about pesticides, just wash or peel your veggies before consuming them. Organic food still uses pesticides, and in fact uses MORE pesticides, as they are limited to far less effective ones. Also, there are regulations on the amount of pesticide residue that is allowed on food and it is way below the amount that could do harm to a person.

MYTH: Clean Eating Is Healthier

REALITY: The definition of clean eating changes depending on where you look. It can cover anything from eating only raw food (dangerous) to eating only organic food, and everything in between. *Clean eating is a marketing scheme and is very expensive to maintain at best and at worst it can lead to exclusion of essential food groups and nutrients from your diet.*

MYTH: Detoxes Are Necessary

REALITY: *If your kidney and liver are functioning, they are doing all the detoxing that your body needs.* Acute toxicity is a medical emergency requiring urgent treatment, not juice. In fact, by needlessly reducing your intake of nutrients, you're actually impairing your body's ability to filter out toxins and potentially even doing damage to those organs. Drink water and eat a balanced diet, your body will take care of the rest.

Actual Nutrition Suggestions (it's not so difficult)

- Include as much plant-based food as you can in your diet
- Enjoy protein-rich foods like lean meats, eggs (with yolk), legumes, and yoghurt
- Choose whole-grain or enriched wheat products
- Limit highly processed foods, prepare your own food whenever possible
- Make water your beverage of choice
- Listen to your body's hunger cues
- Eat what makes your body feel good, stop eating foods that don't
- Stop dieting unless prescribed by a doctor or registered dietician

Remember that nutrition shouldn't cost any more than your usual grocery bill. Be critical of who you take nutrition advice from, especially if they're trying to sell you something.