

Myths vs. Facts

MYTH: High-protein/low-carbohydrate diets are a healthy way to lose weight.

FACT: The long-term health effects of a high-protein/low-carbohydrate diet are unknown. However, eating a lot of high-protein foods (meat, eggs, and cheese) is not a balanced diet. The key is balance and moderation of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats.



MYTH: Certain foods, like grapefruit, celery, or cabbage soup, can burn fat and make you lose weight.

FACT: No foods burn fat. Some with caffeine can speed up your metabolism (the way your body uses calories) for a short time, but they do not cause weight loss. Too much caffeine can lead to irregular heart rhythms, high blood pressure, gastrointestinal problems, and trouble sleeping.

MYTH: Low-fat or nonfat means no calories.

FACT: Low-fat or nonfat food is usually lower in fat than a full-fat product. However, many processed low-fat or nonfat foods have just as many calories as the full-fat version of the same food or even more calories. They can contain added sugar, flour, or starch thickeners. These ingredients add calories.

MYTH: Fast foods are always an unhealthy choice and you should not eat them when dieting.

FACT: Fast foods can be part of a healthy weight loss program if you go about it the right way. Avoid supersize combo meals or split one with a friend. Sip on water or nonfat milk instead of soda. Choose salads and grilled foods. Skip items like regular mayonnaise, salad dressings, bacon, and cheese.

MYTH: Eating after 8 p.m. causes weight gain.

FACT: What matters is what and how much you eat and how much physical activity you do during the whole day that determines whether you gain, lose, or maintain your weight. It is best to eat throughout the day with 3 moderate meals and 2 to 3 small healthy snacks in between your meals.



MYTH: Nuts are fattening and you should not eat them if you want to lose weight.

FACT: In small amounts, nuts can be part of a healthy weight loss program. Most nuts contain healthy unsaturated fats that can help reduce bad cholesterol and may lower risk of heart disease.

MYTH: Eating red meat is bad for your health and makes it harder to lose weight.

FACT: Eating lean meat in small amounts can be part of a healthy weight-loss plan. Red meat, pork, chicken, and fish contain some cholesterol and saturated fat (the least healthy kind of fat). They also contain healthy nutrients like protein, iron, and zinc.

MYTH: Dairy products are fattening and unhealthy.

FACT: Low-fat and nonfat milk, yogurt, and cheese have good amounts of calcium and vitamins added to them to make them as nutritious as whole milk dairy products, but they are lower in fat and calories.



MYTH: “Going vegetarian” means you are sure to lose weight and be healthier.

FACT: Choosing a vegetarian diet with a low-fat content may be helpful for weight loss, but vegetarians—like non-vegetarians—can make poor food choices as well. Eating large amounts of high-fat, high-calorie foods or foods with little or no nutritional value can keep vegetarians from losing weight.