



# 7 Food Myths

We Americans have a long history of nutritional faux pas. Not too long ago, people were putting margarine on their toast and the tub of Crisco shortening was a kitchen staple. But even as scientific knowledge evolves, people tend to cling to certain beliefs about food. Here are seven myths, debunked.

## **MYTH: You Should Stick to Low-Fat Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese if You Want to Stay Slim and Avoid Heart Disease.**

This is one that's going to take a long time to sink in. It's difficult to find anyone in a healthcare field that recommends consuming full-fat dairy for weight loss and health. "Low-fat dairy products" is a mantra in dietary advice. But it turns out it's wrong.

Walter Willett, the chair of the Nutrition Department at the Harvard School of Public Health, is even on board. He theorizes that the reason high-fat dairy appears to be better than low-fat for keeping weight off is that these foods are more satiating. Another possibility he mentions is that certain components of dairy fat may help with weight regulation.

As for cardiovascular risks, large analyses have shown no correlation between high-fat dairy and increased risk. Some researchers hypothesize that healthy components in dairy fat override any negative effects.

**Bottom line:** *Don't go crazy, but you can probably cut back on the flavorless, reduced-fat cheese and start using whole milk or cream in your coffee.*

## **MYTH: Sugar-Free Candy, Cakes, and Ice Cream are Good Choices for People with Diabetes.**

This annoying issue is a side effect of the confusion about the word sugar. If the word only referred to the sweet, white granular stuff in the little bowl, things would be easier. Or if, instead of blood sugar, they called it “blood carbohydrate.”

Carbs raise blood glucose. Sugar is just one of many kinds of carbs. Sugar-free foods can still be high in carbs.

***Bottom line:** Sugar free does not mean carb free. It doesn't even mean low carb. When comparing products, look at the Nutrition Facts labels and go directly to carbohydrates.*

## **MYTH: Taking Vitamins Won't Help You Lose Weight.**

Ok, this isn't really a myth, but it's too important to leave out. Recent research suggests that for obese people who are deficient in vitamin D, taking supplements can help them lose weight. An estimated 40 percent of adults in the United States are vitamin D-deficient (some sources say the number is much higher), with the highest rates seen in black and Hispanic people. Vitamin D deficiency is not only a possible factor in obesity, it's also been linked to several other risk factors for the leading causes of death.

***Bottom line:** Ask your doctor to test your vitamin D levels, and talk to him or her about taking a supplement.*

## **MYTH: How Thin or Fat You are is Determined By The “Energy In, Energy Out” Equation. In Other Words, a Calorie's a Calorie.**

It is still preached all over the Internet and even in dietitian's offices: The only way to lose weight is to expend more calories than you consume. But this thinking has been challenged by smart scientists, and loads of research has shown it to be untrue. Our bodies are just way more complicated than that. When we eat certain foods—e.g., the ones that spike blood glucose—the

body pumps out a big dose of the hormone insulin. Excess insulin helps make excess belly fat, not to mention causing a slew of other negative health effects.

**Bottom line:** *Especially in people who are overweight or have compromised insulin function, eating a healthy, low-carb, low-glycemic diet is the way to go.*

## **MYTH: American Cheese.**

It's not cheese. It's not even a food, it's a food product. The reason the Kraft American Singles label says, "pasteurized prepared cheese product" is because things can only be called cheese if they are made of at least 51 percent cheese. This product is made of milk byproducts and a long list of additives.

**Bottom line:** *Yes, it melts nicely. But come on, the ingredients in your cheese should be: cheese.*

## **MYTH: Don't Eat Foods High in Cholesterol.**

It's been a long time coming, but finally, we can rewind and erase everything you've been told about dietary cholesterol. The nutrition powers-that-be have officially removed it from the naughty list. Moderation is key, always, but at least when you eat delicious and nutritious egg yolks, lobster tails, shrimp cocktail, and grass-fed filet of beef, you don't have to worry about the grams of cholesterol.

**Bottom line:** *Be smart, be moderate, and eat a variety of whole, natural foods with plants outweighing all the rest.*

## **MYTH: Juicing is a Healthy Way to Detox.**

This is two food myths in one.

First, the whole detox thing is hogwash. If you have a substance addiction, if you have a drug overdose or get bitten by a snake, there are methods for

detoxifying your body. But this sort of thing has to be done by doctors in medical facilities.

As for environmental pollutants, junk food, or too many martinis, our bodies' organs are extremely efficient at processing these toxins. And there's no shake or pill or colon cleansing that can do what these organs do or improve on them.

Second, juicing is nothing more than a brilliant way to remove half of the nutrients in fruits and veggies and increase their sugar content exponentially. And if you have diabetes, the idea that you'd pulverize superfoods perfectly created in nature, thereby increasing the sugar concentration and removing the fiber (the one thing that slows the rush of carbs into blood) is, to put it mildly, impractical.

***Bottom line: Drink water. Eat food.***

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