



The truth about weight loss: Myths and facts



Health



Wellness



Nutrition



Support

Introduction

Is weight loss as simple as eating less and moving more? Do carbohydrates really make you gain weight? Is eating vegan actually healthier?

With so much information available to us, it's hard to know what to trust and what advice to follow. In this booklet we cover some of the more common questions you may be asking about healthy eating and attempt to understand the truth about diets and dieting.

Most of the advice we read has a basis in fact, but ends up going that little bit further adding in personal opinions. With such a huge topic to uncover, it's understandable that we may see lots of information that doesn't match up.

Here you'll find some of the most common myths about weight loss, to make sure you don't get tripped up by the wrong advice.

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Calories in vs. calories out is all that matters

Eating fewer calories than our body needs is a scientific fact we need to consider in weight loss. However, it's not the only thing we should be thinking about and if it really was that simple, weight loss wouldn't be so tricky to maintain.

Don't just choose low calorie foods and diet products as they are often missing essential nutrients the body wants and needs. Foods that are higher in calories, such as eggs and nuts, can be enjoyed as part of a healthy balanced diet. They provide us with essential nutrients our body needs and support us in feeling full and satisfied.

Simply choosing low calorie options ignores the fact our bodies need a good balance of nutrients, which should come from natural whole foods. If you only follow the "calories in, calories out" method, it's likely you'll be choosing foods that do not fill you up as much and have lower nutritional value.

All calories are equal

A calorie is a measurement of energy. However, this does not mean that all calorie sources have the same effect on your weight. Try to consider the types of food you are eating, rather than just the calorie content.

For example: a slice of white bread has the same number of calories as a slice of wholegrain bread. However, wholegrain bread contains more fibre and nutrients as it is less refined. This affects how it is digested and how many nutrients our body absorbs.

Eating natural, less refined and processed foods will help us to feel satisfied and keep our calorie intake under control. Less refined foods are digested more slowly, and our body doesn't get all the calories from the label. We should try to stop counting every calorie and focus instead on highly nutritious foods for our health.

Foods that are high in fat are unhealthy

Foods that are high fat can be given a bad name and we can often avoid them simply because they contain fat. However, fat is an essential nutrient for our bodies and can help you maintain a healthy weight.

Look for foods lower in saturated fat with plenty of unsaturated fats (e.g. nuts and fish).

As with any nutrient we need the right balance and if you eat too much fat it can be harmful to health. That's a problem here in the UK, where our diets are often too high in fat, so some reduction is useful.

However, if your diet doesn't have too much fat in it, there is no need to reduce it further. Just focus on the types of foods you're eating and aim for a healthy balance.



Carbohydrates will make you gain weight

As with fats, many people avoid carbohydrates over fears that eating them will cause weight gain, type 2 diabetes, and other health conditions. However, eating a sensible amount of carbohydrates that are high in fibre, vitamins and minerals will benefit your health, not harm it!

Diets that contain wholegrains, healthy fats, and proteins have been associated with a reduced risk of obesity, diabetes, certain types of cancers, and heart disease.

Sugar in foods like fruit and vegetables does not need to be avoided. Highly processed carbohydrates such as cakes, biscuits and sugary drinks should be eaten less often and in lesser amounts however, as these foods have been shown to contribute to weight gain and poor health.

Diet foods will help you lose weight

Many unhealthy and processed foods are marketed as 'healthy'. The food industry knows how to sell products and will use terms like 'high protein', 'low fat' and 'fat free' to encourage us to buy them.

Even some high-sugar drinks are advertised with nutritional benefits and positive health claims on the packaging. Remember, these labels usually exist to sell the products to us not inform us on our health.

Foods labelled as 'diet' foods are not necessarily beneficial for our health. Instead, choose more natural foods and less processed options as part of a healthy diet for better health. Remember to consider portion sizes too, and how often you have them.

Dieting is the most effective way to lose weight

When we gain weight, often our first thought is to cut or restrict certain foods to reverse what has happened and lose weight (dieting). This can be successful but also takes a toll on us mentally and physically as we cut out foods and reduce the amount of beneficial nutrients we eat.

After all the effort, unless we can maintain that way of eating for the long term, we will regain the weight lost, if not put on even more. Weight loss should be approached slowly, with gradual changes to diet combined with increasing physical activity levels by doing something we enjoy.

Remember... dieting and diet are not the same!

Dieting = restricting and cutting out foods. This can be time consuming, stressful and causes regular yo-yo weight loss and gain. Many popular health plans are just fancy names for diets.

Diet = what you eat and drink day-to-day. It's individual to every person and includes all food types.



Remember there is not one diet out there that can claim to be the most successful. Unless you can stick to it for life, a diet will inevitably fail. Instead of dieting, introduce small changes to make your diet nutritious, beneficial, and something you enjoy.

Cutting food groups will help your body 'detox'

Detoxing can be thought of in the same way as dieting, restricting food and drink to 'reset' your body. By doing this you deny your body essential nutrients, vitamins and minerals it needs.

We often feel better due to the fact we have removed some of the unhealthy foods at the same time, but your body does not need you to detox. Your kidneys and liver perform this role more effectively than any fancy plan of cutting, adding or restricting foods.

These organs take all the toxins from your body to keep us healthy. You can help them by reducing the number of processed foods in your diet and by eating more natural food products, so they don't have to work as hard.

You need to lower your BMI to be healthy

Body Mass Index, or 'BMI', is a simple tool using your height and weight to give a score, determining your risk of poorer health and disease. Simply put, the higher your BMI, the higher the risk.

Carrying too much body fat is harmful to health and this does result in a higher BMI. However, focusing on BMI alone can lead to an unhealthy focus on the scales.

Instead, think about measuring your progress in other ways. Energy levels, mood, diet, body fat percentage and waist measurements can measure progress even if the number on the scales does not change.

If you combine healthier eating with exercise, changes in muscle mass will also affect weight loss as muscle weighs more than fat - but you'll still be improving your health.

By leading a healthier lifestyle and varying the measurements you take, you can see progress without developing an unhealthy obsession with the scales and BMI.

Going gluten free will improve your health

Gluten free diets have become very popular in recent years.

Gluten is a type of protein found in certain wheat and rye foods. Some people can have an intolerance, causing varying levels of discomfort in the digestive system, depending on the person, from mild to very severe.

There are a wide range of foods created without Gluten to allow people with an



intolerance a greater choice in carbohydrate foods. However, unless you have a specific intolerance, there is no proven benefit to avoiding any foods that contain gluten.

A vegan diet is the best diet for health

There are many benefits to eating a vegan diet, both nutritionally and for the environment, and it's estimated around 1 In 3 people eat a vegan diet for different reasons.

Such is the vegan diet's popularity, the term 'vegan friendly' is often used as a marketing trick for products, making us believe they are a healthier choice.

Everyone can benefit from reducing the amount of food we eat from animal products such as red meat and full fat dairy, and reducing the number of processed foods we consume. A plant-based diet has lots of benefits but be aware of foods marketing themselves to sound healthier and always check the label for added sugars, fats and salt.

Tips to remember

- If it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.
- If it's being advertised to you, check the benefits carefully.
- Any advice you follow might work in the short term. However, there are no 'diets' that have proven success long term for everyone.
- A balanced diet that Includes foods you enjoy is going to be the easiest plan to stick to.
- Don't feel guilty about choosing processed or high sugar and fat foods sometimes. It's important to enjoy what we eat!

Final thought

Following a healthy balanced diet that works for you and your family is not easy. The amount of food marketing and highly processed foods, and a lack of cheaper healthier options, makes managing our health through diet extremely difficult.

If you would like to learn more or require more information and support, please get in touch or visit our website.

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