



Top Five Dieting and Nutrition Myths

You've probably heard the following statements about nutrition. Like many people, you may believe they are true. Are they? The following myths are followed by the facts.

Myth #1: All fats are bad.

- We all need fat in our diets. Fats help us absorb certain nutrients. They make up an important part of every cell membrane in our body and help with proper nerve function, among other things.
- When we eat too much fat, it can lead to weight gain, heart disease, and certain types of cancers.
- Some fats are good for us, but some increase our risks of heart disease, cancer, and weight gain. The key is to replace bad fats (saturated, hydrogenated, and trans) with good fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated).
- Best bets? Olive, canola, and flax oils; fatty fish like salmon and sardines; avocados; raw nuts and seeds; natural peanut butter and ground flax seed.

Myth #2: Eating eggs will raise your cholesterol.

- This myth began because egg yolks do have a lot of cholesterol compared to other foods. However, studies suggest that eating one egg per day will not raise cholesterol levels.
- Eggs are actually a great source of nutrients.
- Most people don't realize that the saturated fat content of a food raises cholesterol levels. Eggs have a very low saturated fat content. Just don't eat them with lots of cheese, butter, or a side of bacon or sausage. Pair them with fresh fruit and whole-wheat toast and you're good to go.

Myth #3: Excess protein is good for energy and muscle building.

- The body uses protein as fuel only as a last resort. Most extra protein is stored as body fat. Most athletes don't realize that they need plenty of carbohydrates to build muscle tissue.
- Eating *some* extra protein is necessary to build muscle mass, but only if you are also doing a lot of weight training at the same time. Even then, your increased needs can easily come from other foods.
- Too much protein can be hard on the kidneys. It also means you may not be getting enough healthy fat or wholesome carbohydrates.

Myth #4: Avoid carbohydrates to lose weight.

- It is important to limit the amount of carbohydrates in your diet that come from white flour and sugar. However, people who go to the extremes to cut out the carbs are missing out on a very important food group that include fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains.
- Allow 45 percent to 50 percent of your diet to come from these healthy carb sources (half of those from veggies). Then fill in the rest with about 25 percent to 30 percent healthy fat and 15 percent to 20 percent lean protein.
- Severely limiting carbs will result in the loss of more muscle and water than fat. Balance is the key.

Myth #5: To lose weight, follow an extremely low-calorie diet.

- Many people think that eating less and/or skipping meals will make them lose weight. However, one of two things will happen. They will get so hungry that they'll overeat later in the day – or they will eat too little.
- When you eat too little, your body thinks it's in starvation mode. This slows down the rate at which you burn calories.
- At first, you might see some weight loss. This is usually the loss of lean muscle tissue and water – along with just a little fat.
- When you gain the weight back, it will be all fat. A better approach is to eat smaller, more frequent, healthy meals and snacks to keep your blood sugar balanced.
- To lose one pound a week, try decreasing your total daily calories by just 500 a day. Eat every three to four hours. This will maximize fat loss and keep your metabolism operating at top speed.