

Diet Myths That Will Not Die

Olive oil is the best oil, hands down

Some experts actually state that canola oil might be better, because it is lower in saturated fat and has more polyunsaturated fat than olive oil. This matters because polyunsaturated fats lower low-density lipoprotein (LDL), the “bad cholesterol,” more than the monounsaturated fats found in olive oil. Both are good for you, but do not use olive oil to the exclusion of canola oil. Let them share the spotlight!

Vitamin C boosts your immune system, helping you to fight off illness

Actually, it seems that vitamin C has no effect on one’s ability to fight off the average cold. It may, however, shorten the common cold by about one half day, but even these results vary among studies. Contrary to popular belief, no research shows that vitamin C is beneficial to people with any other kind of illness.

High-fructose corn syrup is worse for you than regular sugar

In the past 30 years, usage of high-fructose corn syrup in our food supply has increased more than 1000%. The rates of overweight and obesity have climbed and climbed in those same years, but that definitely does not mean that the two are interdependent. Many researchers are hesitant to place the blame solely on high-fructose corn syrup and in fact blame diets that are high in all sugars, the increased intake of calories in any form, and the decreased physical activity done by modern Americans.

People with diabetes should buy “sugar-free” foods

“Sugar free” does not mean “carbohydrate free.” Many sugar-free foods contain as many, or more, carbohydrates as “regular” versions. Your best bet is to carefully scrutinize all food labels. Remember that 15 grams (g) of carbohydrates equals 1 carbohydrate choice. It does not matter, for the sake of carbohydrate counting, what form those 15 g of carbohydrate come in—natural sugar, added sugar, grain, etc.

Peanut butter is high in fat—avoid it

Yes, 2 tablespoons of peanut butter do contain 190 calories and 17 g of fat. However, keep in mind that peanut butter is an excellent source of protein and provides vitamin E, fiber, magnesium, copper, folate, potassium, and niacin. The fat in peanut butter is the monounsaturated form, which lowers LDL and total cholesterol levels. Peanut butter also is proven to reduce the risk of diabetes and lower triglyceride levels

Drinking wine will save your heart

The studies regarding the beneficial effects of alcohol on heart disease risk remain controversial. The 6000 men who were followed for 20 years showed no beneficial relationship. An increased overall risk of mortality from all causes was seen in men who drank more than 22 drinks/week. In addition, men drinking more than 35 drinks/week had twice the risk of dying from stroke.

Grape juice is perhaps more suitable for lowering blood pressure than red wine. Alcohol causes an increase in triglycerides. At autopsy, the heart of a person who suffered from alcoholism will weigh twice as much as the heart of nonalcoholics. Still, some researchers recommend a moderate alcohol intake for reduction of cardiovascular disease, because of the antioxidants contained in it. At any rate, it is not recommended that a man consume more than two drinks/day or a woman more than one drink/day.

For the best health, buy foods that are labeled as high fiber

Isolated fibers, including inulin, maltodextrin, oat fiber, soy fiber, modified wheat starch, sugarcane fiber, and polydextrose, may not improve regularity, decrease cholesterol, or improve blood glucose levels the way that intact, natural fiber does.

Energy bars and drinks help to improve exercise performance and are great to eat before your 30- to 60-minute regular workout

Studies have shown that these supplemental food products are no better for athletes than any other food containing an equal amount of calories and carbohydrate. They were originally designed for endurance athletes, such as marathon runners who needed nonperishable and portable food to take with them. These bars usually contain at least 200 calories, which would take a 150-pound person about 20 minutes of running at 5 miles per hour to burn off.

Vitamin-infused waters are a great choice for healthy, on-the-go people

Any water-soluble vitamins will pass into your urine, if your intake is more than what you need. That is a waste of money, but not particularly dangerous to you. However, fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E, and K) are stored in your body, and if you consume more than you need, they have the possibility of an “overdose” with some negative health effects. No solid evidence exists to prove that any vitamins help to either increase your energy or calm you down when you are feeling frazzled.

Organic food is more nutritious

The American Dietetic Association states that the vitamin, mineral, and antioxidant levels in organic foods are no different from the nutritional qualities of conventional foods. A cookie is still a cookie nutritionally, whether or not it is an organic cookie. You should eat all cookies in moderation.

References and recommended readings

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