



Healthy Habits

Tips and resources for living well



This month: Nutrition Myths and Trends

Get the facts! Eating a balanced diet can help you maintain a healthy weight and optimal health. But sometimes it's difficult to understand what constitutes proper nutrition. There are many types of diets to choose from, but not all of them are healthy. In this edition of Healthy Habits, we'll debunk popular diet myths, help you understand which fats to enjoy in moderation (and which to avoid), and provide insight on two popular diet trends.

A healthy side dish:

Lemon asparagus

Asparagus is in peak season this month! This healthy side dish pairs well with seafood, especially salmon.

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch fresh asparagus
- 1 lemon, thinly sliced
- 1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 Tsp. chopped fresh oregano, or 1 Tsp. dried
- ¼ Tsp. salt
- ¼ Tsp. fresh ground pepper

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 450 degrees F.
- Toss all ingredients on a baking sheet and roast, stirring occasionally, until the asparagus is tender-crisp (about 8-10 minutes).

Top diet myths, debunked!

Keep healthy food at hand

With so much nutrition information on the market, sometimes it's difficult to know what to believe. Don't fall prey to these diet myths!

Myth: You can never have [insert delicious treat here] again. False!

In any healthy diet, there's room for a small indulgence. Having an occasional treat is okay if your overall diet is nutritious.

Myth: Eating fat makes you fat. False!

It actually depends on the fat you're eating. Saturated fats (red meat, butter, cheese, and ice cream) should be limited, but other types of fats like mono- and poly-unsaturated fats (nuts, seeds, fish, avocado, and vegetable oils) are beneficial when eaten in moderation.

Myth: Drinking too much water causes you to gain water weight. False!

People retain water when there is too high a concentration of sodium in their blood. Drinking more water actually helps balance the sodium concentration and helps the tissues release any retained liquids.

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Choosing Healthy Fats

Which to eat, which to avoid

It's a common misconception that all fats are bad for you. While certain types of fats should be avoided, others can promote good health when eaten in moderation.

Good fats: In general, healthy fats come from plants instead of animals or labs. On food labels, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are considered the “good fats.” Sources of “good fats” include plant-based oils (like olive oil and canola oil), avocados, nuts, seeds, and fish. Stick to the recommended serving size; don't overindulge on these foods!

Bad fats: Avoid trans fats, often found in processed foods. They may raise unhealthy cholesterol, potentially increasing risk of heart disease and type 2 diabetes. If you see the words “hydrogenated” or “saturated” on a food label, that indicates trans fat—steer clear! Saturated fats also increase unhealthy cholesterol. Consuming small amounts of saturated fat from red meat and dairy is acceptable, but aim to limit this type of fat.

Juicing: safe or not?

The lowdown on liquid diets

Juicing—forgoing solid foods in favor of a liquid diet of juices made from fruits and vegetables—has emerged as a recent diet trend. While having a fruit and vegetable drink can be a delicious snack, liquid diets are not appropriate unless recommended by your doctor for a specific health condition. Eating a healthy, balanced diet—including foods from all the food groups—is important for good health and nutrition.

Although juice is normally touted as a health food, juicing removes the fiber from the whole fruit or vegetable, so it isn't as nutritionally beneficial as eating a piece of fruit or a serving of veggies. Occasionally making your own juice can be a good way to satisfy picky eaters who don't enjoy eating fruits and vegetables, but it's best to eat these foods in whole form whenever possible.

Ditch gluten, drop pounds?

The truth behind the trend

Gluten is a protein found in grains such as wheat, barley, and rye. Although some people believe a gluten-free diet can help them lose weight, this diet is usually only recommended for people with Celiac disease or gluten intolerance. If you think you may have one of these conditions, talk to your doctor to see if a gluten-free diet could benefit you.

In general, the best way to maintain a healthy weight is to eat a well-balanced diet that includes healthy carbohydrates like whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and beans. You should also limit processed carbs like white bread, pastries, and soda. If, per your doctor, you need to avoid gluten, consider incorporating gluten-free whole grains like brown rice or quinoa into your diet.

Nutrition QUIZ

- 1. True or false: Drinking water makes you gain weight.**
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 2. True or false: You should talk to your doctor before trying a gluten-free diet.**
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 3. True or false: For heart health, avoid food products with the word “hydrogenated” in the ingredients list.**
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 4. True or false: Trans fats are the healthiest fats.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

Answers: 1 b, 2 a, 3 a, 4 b