

Weight-loss and Nutrition Myths

“Lose 30 pounds in 30 days!”

“Eat as much as you want and still lose weight!”

“Drink this shake and lose weight!”

Have you heard these claims before? A large number of diets and tools are available, but their quality may vary. It can be hard to know what to believe.

This fact sheet may help. Here, we discuss myths and provide facts and tips about weight loss and nutrition. This information may help you make healthy changes in your daily habits. You can also talk to your healthcare provider or registered dietitian to give you advice on a healthy eating plan and safe ways to lose weight and keep it off.

Myth: Fad diets will help me lose weight and keep it off.

Fact: Fad diets are not the best way to lose weight and keep it off. These diets often promise quick weight loss if you strictly reduce what you eat or restrict certain types of foods. Some of these diets may help you lose weight at first. However, these diets are difficult to follow. Most people quickly get tired of them or complete the “30 days” and regain any lost weight.

Fad diets may be unhealthy, too. They may not provide all of the nutrients that your body needs. This is because some of these diets may ask you to restrict all carbohydrates or all dairy. This

then eliminates a whole food group to eat when a food group often contains a majority of an essential nutrient. For example, the dairy group contributes the most to achieving our calcium and vitamin D recommendations. Also, losing more than 3 pounds per week after the first initial weeks may increase your risk of developing gallstones (solid matter in the gallbladder that can cause pain). Being on a diet fewer than 800 calories a day for an extended amount of time may lead to serious heart problems.

TIP: Research suggests safe weight loss involves combining a reduced-calorie diet (portion-controlled diet) with physical activity to lose ½ to 2 pounds a week (after the first few weeks of weight loss). Make healthy food choices. Eat smaller portions. Build exercise into your daily life. Combined, these habits may be a healthy way to lose weight and keep it off. These habits may also lower your chances of developing heart disease, high blood pressure, and type 2 diabetes.

Healthy habits may help you lose weight.

- **Make healthy food choices.** Half of your plate should be fruits and veggies.
- **Be conscious of portion sizes.** Use a smaller plate, weigh portions on a scale, or check the Nutrition Facts label for details about serving sizes.
- **Build exercise into your daily life.** Garden, go for family walks, play a pick-up game of sports, swim, take the stairs, or park at the end of the parking lot.

Myth: Grain products such as bread, pasta, and rice are fattening. I should avoid them when trying to lose weight

Fact: A grain product is any food made from wheat, rice, oats, cornmeal, barley, or another cereal grain. Grains are divided into subgroups, whole grains and refined grains. Whole grains contain the entire grain kernel – the bran, germ, and endosperm. Examples include brown rice and 100% whole wheat bread, cereal, and pasta. Refined grains have been milled, a process that removes the bran and germ. This is done to give grains a finer texture and improve their shelf life, but it also removes dietary fiber, iron, and many B vitamins.

People who eat whole grains as part of a healthy diet may lower their chances of developing some chronic diseases. Government dietary guidelines advise making half your grains whole grains. For example, choose 100% whole wheat bread instead of white bread, and brown rice instead of white rice.

TIP: To lose weight, focus on portion sizes rather than restricting or avoiding certain foods while working to increase the amount of physical activity you do each day. Create and follow a healthy eating plan that replaces less healthy options with a mix of fruits, veggies, whole grains, protein foods, and low-fat dairy:

- Eat a mix of fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products, fruits, veggies, whole grains, and lean proteins.
- Limit added sugars, salt (sodium), and saturated fat.

Myth: Some people can eat whatever they want and still lose weight.

Fact: Everybody is different and unique. What works for someone else may or may not work for you. In reality, a number of factors such as your age, genes, medicines, and lifestyle habits may affect your weight. This is why it is

important to consult your healthcare provider and registered dietitian to learn about factors that may affect your individual weight loss. Together, you may be able to create a plan to help you reach your weight and health goals.

TIP: When trying to lose weight, you can still eat your favorite foods as part of a healthy eating plan. But you must watch your portion sizes. Reduce your portion sizes and find ways to make your favorite foods a bit healthier. For example, you can bake foods rather than frying them. Use low-fat milk in place of cream. Make half your plates fruits and veggies.

Eat the rainbow!



When making half of your plate fruits and veggies, choose foods with vibrant colors that are packed with fiber, minerals,

and vitamins.

- **Red:** bell peppers, cherries, cranberries, onions, red beets, strawberries, tomatoes, watermelon
- **Green:** avocado, broccoli, cabbage, cucumber, dark lettuce, grapes, honeydew, asparagus, spinach, kiwi, zucchini
- **Orange and yellow:** apricots, bananas, carrots, mangoes, oranges, peaches, squash, sweet potatoes
- **Blue and purple:** blackberries, blueberries, grapes, plums, purple cabbage, purple carrots, purple potatoes

Myth: Eating healthy food costs too much.

Fact: Eating better does not have to cost an arm and a leg. Try purchasing canned or frozen fruits and vegetables. Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables actually provide you with just as many nutrients as fresh fruits and vegetables, but at a lower cost and a longer shelf life. Healthy options include low-salt canned veggies and fruit canned in its own juice (100% fruit juice). Remember to rinse canned veggies to remove excess salt. Also, canned, dried, or frozen beans, lentils, and peas are also healthy sources of protein that are easy on the wallet.

TIP: Check the nutrition facts label on canned, dried, and frozen items. Look for items that are high in calcium, fiber, potassium, protein, and vitamin D. Also check items to make sure they are low in added sugars, saturated fat, and sodium.

Myth: If I skip meals, I can lose weight.

Fact: Skipping meals may actually allow for weight gain rather than weight loss. Skipping meals typically make you feel hungrier and lead you to binge on foods later in the day. In fact, studies show that skipping meals may be associated with obesity since people who skip meals tend to weigh more than people who don't.

TIP: Bring snacks and meals with you on-the-go if you know you will not have time to make your lunch or sit down and eat it.

- For a quick breakfast, make overnight oatmeal in a mason jar. Look up great recipes online.
- Pack a healthy lunch each night, so you won't be rushed in the morning to make one.
- For healthy snacking, pack a low-fat greek yogurt, celery with hummus, or

whole wheat crackers with peanut butter.

Myth: Going vegetarian will help me lose weight and be healthier.

Fact: Research does show that people who follow a vegetarian diet do tend to eat fewer calories and less fat than non-vegetarians. In addition, vegetarians do tend to have a lower body mass index (BMI) than people with other eating plans. However, vegetarians may also be eating a very low-protein diet if they do not incorporate many plant-based proteins. And, vegetarians can still make poor food choices like anyone else, like eating large amounts of foods, foods low in nutrients, and foods that are high in fat – all in which can impact weight gain. It is best to choose a diet that is best for your health and your lifestyle.

TIP: If a vegetarian lifestyle is right for you, be sure you get enough of the nutrients that others usually get from animal products such as eggs, cheese, milk, and meat. Nutrients that may be lacking in a vegetarian diet are calcium, iron, protein, vitamin B12, vitamin D, and zinc.

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Additional Resources:

- **University of Idaho Extension.** Call the Canyon County Extension Office at 208-459-6003 and ask to speak with the FCS educator.
- **The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.** Visit <http://www.eatright.org> for nutrition information or call 1-800-877-1600 to find a registered dietitian in your area.
- **Choose MyPlate.** Visit <http://www.choosemyplate.gov> to access information, tips, and interactive tools on healthy eating.
- **How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label.** Visit the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's website (<http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm274593.htm>) to help guide you in using nutrition labels to help select healthy foods.

