



## Demystifying food myths

Unfortunately, a lot still fall into the diet myth trap out of their desire and eagerness to fit into a size 2. The worse thing though is not only the fact that these myths are widespread, but that these diet myths, when practiced, have adverse effects on the body.

**Raw food is better than cooked food:** It turns out that some raw foods can actually be worse for you. For example, raw eggplants and beans have toxins that can be harmful to your digestive tract. Some nutrients are also well utilized in the body in cooked form rather than their raw form.

**Plastic cutting boards are more hygienic:** According to a 1993 study, bacteria died after three days on a wood cutting board, but "multiplied out of control" on plastic ones. If you use plastic cutting boards, you can wash it with a "mild solution of bleach and water" every week or so.

**Coffee raises your blood pressure:** Previous studies suggest this, but when you adjust the study for smoking, diet and alcohol intake, "the correlation between hypertension and coffee nearly disappeared."

**You should eat three meals a day:** It's not natural, points out AskMen. "There is absolutely no scientific evidence that animals in the wild eat three regular meals a day," explains the men's journal. They suggest eating when you're hungry, but only enough to feel satisfied.

**Artificial food coloring makes kids hyper:** Bad research in the '70s started this myth, but it was later "ripped to shreds" by real scientists.

**Fat is the enemy.** Majority of the population firmly believes that the reason people grow obese is that they consume fat. However, this is not entirely true. You need fat in the diet in moderation to enable the fat soluble vitamins to be well utilized by the body.

People grow overweight because they consume too much calories and cholesterol that are not burned up due to inadequate physical activities such as exercise. There are different types of fat and some are essential to the body. In fact, blood cholesterol is essential in the build up of cells and the production of vital hormones. Ideally, a third of the calories must be derived from fat. One must distinguish between the good and the bad cholesterol. Remember, cut down on saturated fats and opt for unsaturated fats such as avocados and olive oil.

**Skip meals to lose weight.** When you skip meals, you do not get away with acquiring more calories. On the contrary, studies show that people who skip meals become more obese. This is because skipping meals makes one feel hungrier later on and the appetite out of control, thus eating more than the normal servings.

**Crash dieting is an effective and fast way of losing weight.** Nutrition scientists explain that crash dieting is not only unsustainable but have drastic effects on the body. Crash dieting not only burns off fat, but tissues and lean muscles as well. In addition, crash dieters often feel weak and dizzy.

**Don't eat meals beyond 8 PM.** Food eaten late at night is no more fattening than the rest of the unhealthy food eaten during the rest of the day. It is not true that the body will store more fat during evenings because it is at rest. What makes a person obese is not about the time he or she eats, but the overall amount of calories consumed in a day.

**Quitting smoking will make you gain weight.** Quitting smoking has nothing to do with weight gain. Some people gain weight when they quit smoking because they turn to comfort food to distract themselves from oral fixation. Instead of turning to comfort food, quitters should instead chew sugar-free gums or eat vegetable strips.

**Starches are fattening and should be avoided.** Starchy food such as bread, pasta, beans, cereals, fruits, beans and vegetables such as yams and potatoes are actually low in calories and fat. However, these food are often served with high-fat toppings and rich sauces such as sour cream, butter, mayonnaise and dressings. Starchy food should not be entirely eliminated from the diet because they are sources of energy.

**Nuts must be avoided because these are fattening.** Although nuts are high in fat and calories, these should not be entirely eliminated from the diet. Nuts are rich sources of monounsaturates which are good for the heart. Nuts help keep the blood sugar levels steady. In addition, nuts are rich in fiber, protein and other vitamins and minerals.

**Eating vegetables can't build muscle.** Vegetarians can build muscles in as much as the meat-eaters because they get their protein from plant sources such as tofu, nuts and grains.

**Dairy products are unhealthy.** Dairy products are needed by the body because they contain many nutrients such as protein, Vitamin D and calcium. Choose low-fat and fat-free milk, cheese and yogurt. These are as healthy as whole milk dairy products, but are lower in calories and fat.

**Stay away from red meat.** One need not stay away from red meat in order to lose weight. Although red meat do contain cholesterol and saturated fat, they also contain nutrients such as zinc, iron and protein.

**Instead, choose lean meats and eat them in moderation.** Opt for low-fat meat cuts such as flank steak, tenderloin, sirloin tip, pork tenderloin, beef round steak and extra lean ground beef. Serving size should only be three ounces.

Remember, losing weight is not an overnight process. Don't rush. Instead, take it slowly and surely for a manageable and sustainable weight loss program.