

Food Smarts: Myths and Facts

When it comes to food and eating healthy, you probably hear a lot of opinions and “facts” from your parents, friends, relatives, and teachers. This is partly because older people may have grown up when there was different food information out there, and partly because food companies and advertising want you to believe certain things in order to get you to buy their products. Think you’re a Food Smartie already? See if you know the truth behind these common myths:

Myth: As long as I skip a meal, I can eat whatever I want at my next meal.

Fact: It’s never a good idea to skip a meal, and it won’t make up for eating unhealthy foods, or eating too much, the next time you eat. It’s important to eat three normal-sized and healthy meals a day, and even a few snacks in between, so your body has energy when it needs it. (*See Bariatric Time “To Snack or Not to Snack”*)

Myth: As long as a food package says “All Natural” on it, it’s healthy to eat.

Fact: Even if something is labeled “All Natural,” it can still contain tons of sugar, unsaturated fats, or other ingredients that can be bad for you. Some snacks labeled “All Natural” can contain just as much fat as a candy bar! It’s important to read the BACK of the package, where the Nutrition Facts Label and ingredients list will spell it all out for you.

Myth: If I’m not overweight, I don’t have to be careful about what I eat.

Fact: Even if you’ve never had a problem with your weight, it’s important to choose healthy foods every day. If you think of your body as a machine, then you’ll want to use the very best fuel to keep that machine going strong, and that means staying away from junk food. Also, if you practice poor eating habits now, you could develop health risks in the future.

Myth: I can sweeten my food as much as I want, as long as I use honey instead of sugar.

Fact: Chemically, honey is almost the exact same thing as sugar, and honey can even have more calories than regular sugar. Just as recommended with sugar (whether white or brown), try to use honey only in small amounts.

Myth: A fast-food cheeseburger is a balanced meal, because it has meat, cheese, bread, and vegetables.

Fact: Fast-food cheeseburgers, and almost everything else served at fast-food restaurants, are very high in fats, calories, and sodium. It is okay to enjoy these foods on occasion, but if consumed frequently you might want to opt for healthier choices.

Myth: As long as I take a vitamin pill every day, I don’t need to be careful about what I eat.

Fact: Some nutritionists say that it’s a good idea to take a multi-vitamin, but these pills can’t give you everything you need...not by a long shot! Eating healthy foods gives you fiber, protein, energy, and essential nutrients that are devoid in isolated pills. Try adding fruits and vegetables in their natural form rather than manufactured products.

Myth: Sugar gives you energy. If you need a boost mid-afternoon or before playing sports, eat a candy bar.

Fact: “Simple” sugars like those found in chocolate, cookies, candies, and cakes definitely cause spikes in your blood sugar level, which may make you feel a quick shot of energy in your system. But after that first rush, blood sugar drops sharply, and you’ll suddenly feel like you have less energy than before consumption.

Myth: Energy bars are a good way to get needed vitamins and minerals.

Fact: Energy bars can be a good source of carbohydrates, protein, and fat, but they can be abused like any other food. Eat too many, and you’re doing as much damage to your body as you would eating lots of candy, cake, and cookies. Look at these bars as supplements which should be used in moderation when healthy fruits, vegetable and lean protein sources are not easily accessible.

Myth: Carbohydrates make you fat.

Fact: You may know someone who’s on a “low-carb” diet...after all, it’s the biggest weight-loss trend out there. Anyone following a low carbohydrate diet will lose a substantial amount of water weight in the beginning but weight loss is short

term. Carbohydrates are stored with water and when eliminated from the diet water weight is decreased in the body. Foods that are high in fiber may also be high in carbohydrates but do a fulfilling job in satiating our hunger.

Myth- Eating Fat will make you gain fat

Truth- Eating excess calories turns to stored fat. Many people who eat fat are not fat!). Fat is an important part of a diet. Your body needs fat to function properly. Fat is a nutrient used in the production of cell membranes and hormones. Dietary fat carry fat-soluble vitamins — vitamins A, D, E and K from your food into your body. Fat also helps maintain healthy hair, healthy skin, protects vital organs, keeps the body insulated, and provides a sense of fullness and satiety after meals.