

Healthy Eating Myths

When it comes to healthy eating advice, it can be tough to figure out what is legitimate and what is not. The basic rules are simple: eat a balanced diet with a variety of foods in modest portions.

But fad diets, superfood advertisements and new gimmicks make it tougher to decipher. The National Health Service of England came up with five common myths and the right answers. They work on both sides of the ocean.

Myth 1:

Foods labelled 'low-fat' are always a healthy choice. The reality is low-fat foods can still pack plenty of calories. All the low-fat label really means is that this food is 30 per cent lower in fat than the standard equivalent. So, if the type of food in question is high in fat in the first place - like a doughnut - the low-fat version may also still be high in fat. Low-fat foods are often high in sugar, too, so check the label carefully.

Myth 2:

Steer clear of starchy foods if you want to stay slim. Starchy foods, such as rice, pasta, bread and potatoes, should make up around one-third of everything we eat. This means, we should base our meals on these foods for a healthy, balanced diet.

Myth 3:

Eating less is the secret of a healthy diet. When it comes to healthy eating, balance is the key. While it is true that many of us eat too much, a healthy diet means eating a wide variety of foods in the right proportions. Most people eat too much fat, sugar and salt, and not enough fruit, vegetables and fibre.

Myth 4:

All fat is the same. The reality is that many of us would benefit from cutting down on all types of fat, but swapping saturated for unsaturated fat can have health benefits. Saturated fat - found in sausages, pies, cheese, butter and biscuits - can raise cholesterol and increase your risk of heart disease. But unsaturated fat - found in oily fish, sunflower and olive oils - can help reduce cholesterol and provide essential nutrients. So for a healthy diet, limit the total amount of fat you eat and switch to unsaturated fat where possible.

Myth 5:

I don't add salt to my food, so I can't be eating too much of it. Actually, not salting your food is a good idea, but three-quarters of the salt we eat is already in our food when we buy it. Too much salt can raise blood pressure and increase your risk of stroke and heart problems. Limit salt intake to 2,400mg a day.

- National Health Service

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