

10 Health Food Myths Debunked

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Wasn't it mom who used to say, "Don't believe everything you read"? Once again, she was right! The wealth of information available pertaining to health and nutrition is pretty impressive and a wonderful resource for us all. Unfortunately, marketing gimmicks and unconfirmed sources to misunderstandings and falsities sneak in. Below, we've set the record straight on 10 common misconceptions about health and diet:

1) Fresh is always better than frozen

Freshly shelled peas contain more vitamins than a bag of frozen ones, right? Not exactly. Frozen fruits and vegetables can be just as good as fresh because they are harvested right at their nutritional peak and immediately frozen. The fresh variety often travel far distances and sit on grocery shelves and along the way heat, air, and water can lead to loss of nutrients. So what to do? Buy both. Keep bags of unseasoned veggies and unsweetened fruits in the freezer-they'll come in handy during a week when you don't make it to the market. But also buy plenty of fresh produce, especially in-season edibles. No matter which you choose, be sure to eat it.

2) Sea salt has less sodium

There are several varieties of salt available these days, but one isn't better for you than the other. Pretty packaging and terms like "natural" can be deceptive. Gram for gram, sea salt contains as much sodium as table salt. However, because of its larger crystals, you may be inclined to use less of it.

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3) Red wine is good for you

Doctors agree that a glass of vino a day is chock-full of health benefits, however there's a key word in that sentence-"A"! Once you drink more than one serving, you may counteract the health benefits you get from one glass. One more note: Most studies show that alcohol in any form-whether beer, liquor or wine has health perks so pick your pleasure. But again, the benefits come from moderate drinking-defined as a 5-ounce glass of wine, a 12-ounce bottle of beer, or a one-ounce shot of alcohol. Women should stick with one serving; men, as unfair as it seems, are permitted two.

4) Brown sugar is healthier than white sugar

The difference between these two in terms of health is absolutely nothing. Brown sugar is simply white sugar that has had molasses reintroduced to it. Because of its molasses content, brown sugar does contain minerals, however only in small amounts so the health difference is minuscule.

5) 100% fruit juice is best for you

100% fruit juice counts as a serving of produce but ideally, you should opt for whole fruit over a glass of juice. Why? Juice has more calories than a piece of fruit and lacks fill-you-up fiber. On the other hand, a whole piece of fruit provides vitamins, fiber and, tends to reduce intake of other food.

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6) Organic food is more nutritious

Organic foods are guaranteed to be grown without synthetic flavors, colors, sweeteners, most preservatives, and toxic or long-lasting pesticides and fertilizers and have not been genetically modified. Are they better for the environment? Yes. Are they more nutritious? Not necessarily. The USDA makes no claims that organic foods are healthier than non-organic foods.

7) I exercised so I need a sports drink

Unless you are exercising intensely for more than an hour or in extreme heat, plain old water is sufficient to quench your thirst and replenish any fluids lost. For your typical 30-minute speed walk or treadmill jog, consuming a sports drink is just added calories!

8) Dark bread is always better than white

A darker loaf of bread does not necessarily mean it's made with whole grains-it could simply just contain caramel coloring or a little extra whole wheat and be no healthier than white bread. Look for the words "whole grain" or "100 percent whole wheat" on the package and that the first ingredient listed is: whole wheat, oats, whole rye, whole-grain corn, barley, quinoa, buckwheat, or brown rice.

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eggs are laid by white hens and brown eggs are laid by red hens. Since brown eggs often cost a bit more than white eggs, save your money without sacrificing nutrition.

10) If the label says "All Natural", it must be healthy

Unless it's on meat or poultry (indicating no artificial flavorings, colorings or irradiation), the term "natural" holds no meaning-it's unregulated and undefined.

What's your best healthy eating tip? Tell us in the comments!

- By Jennifer Sweenie

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