

Health Link

Debunking Food and Nutrition Myths

If your New Year's resolution to eat healthier has fallen by the wayside, March Nutrition Month brings a chance to slip back into good munching habits with spring around the corner.

For nearly three decades, dietitians have used the awareness month as an opportunity to remind us of the importance of healthy eating and the positive impact nutrition has on our health and well-being.

But often times, questions about nutrition are posed to our peers and most of us end up relying on word of mouth over anything else. People often get conflicting information about food. One friend swears by the cabbage soup diet and another says the acai berry colon cleanse can do wonders.

This year, in honour of Nutrition Month, dietitians are busting up popular food and nutrition myths by bringing truths to the forefront.

From the facts about carbs and weight loss to information about probiotics, the Dietitians of Canada are tackling 39 food myths with this year's theme "Get the Real Deal on Your Meal."

"The annual National Nutrition Month Campaign (organized by the Dietitians of Canada) aims to help Canadians make informed food choices to best support their health," explains Bev Leslie-Suddaby, registered dietitian and manager of Food and Nutrition Services at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare. "This year's theme is dedicated to busting up popular food and nutrition myths by bringing truths to Canadians from dietitians, the food and nutrition experts."

She says the campaign is a chance to step back from our theories about food and get to know the facts a little better. The following myths and truths are attributed to the Dietitians of Canada 2012 Nutrition Month Campaign Resource Manual for Dietitians.

MYTH: Avoid carbs if you want to lose weight.

THE TRUTH: Cutting carbohydrates might help you lose weight in the short term,

but it's mostly because you are eating less food and fewer calories. Drastically cutting carbs means you'll miss out on the nutritional benefits of healthy choices like whole grains, fruit, starchy vegetables and legumes. Because so many foods are off limits, it can be tough to stick with. To lose weight and keep it off, exercise regularly and use Canada's Food Guide to plan a balanced diet with good food choices in the right amounts for you.

MYTH: "Multi-grain" is the same as "whole grain."

THE TRUTH: Multi-grain isn't always whole grain. Multi-grain products include different grains, but they may not be whole. You'll get the greatest health benefits from eating whole grains. To make sure a food is made with whole grains, look on the food label's ingredient list for the words "whole grain" in front of each grain name. If whole grains are the main ingredients in a food, they should appear first in the ingredient list. Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day.

MYTH: The best way to limit your sodium intake is to stop using the salt shaker.

THE TRUTH: Canadians eat too much sodium, but the salt shaker is not the biggest culprit. Over 75 per cent of the sodium we eat comes from processed foods, package and ready-to-eat foods, and restaurant meals. Only about 11 per cent comes from salt added when cooking at home and salt you shake on at the table. The rest of the sodium you get occurs naturally in foods. To limit the sodium you eat, choose fewer pre-packaged convenience foods and restaurant meals and enjoy more lower sodium foods that you can cook at home.

To read up on more myths and truths, visit <http://www.dietitians.ca/nutritionmonth>. To connect for free with a Registered Dietitian to ask about nutrition, food and healthy eating, call EatRight Ontario during business hours Monday to Friday at 1-877-510-5102.

Health Link is an awareness column brought to you on behalf of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare.