



# NutritionMatters

Nutrition Services | Health Services Department

## Nutrition Information ... Who Can You Trust?

It seems like wherever we turn today, there are claims about special diets and dietary products that will cure specific health problems or help one to lose weight. We are bombarded by nutrition information from the internet, TV, radio, magazines, newspapers and so called 'nutrition experts'. With all this information out there, it can be a challenge to figure out who and what to trust.

**Use this checklist to help you decide whether the nutrition information is reliable:**



- ✓ **The information is from a professional source.**  
Organizations like *Health Canada* or *Dietitians of Canada* give reliable information. Anyone with the initials 'RD' after their name is a registered dietitian. RDs are recognized professionals in nutrition and provide reliable information. Be wary if the source makes claims like "world's foremost nutritionist".
- ✓ **The resource is current.**  
Always check the date on the article or website. Information older than five years may be outdated.
- ✓ **The information is scientific and not based on an opinion or a personal story.**  
Health and nutrition advice should be based on research. If it does not have a list of sources, it may be based on an opinion or personal story instead of science. Personal success stories or testimonials are not reliable scientific evidence. What may work for one person, may not work for you!
- ✓ **The claim should not sound too good to be true and should not rely on special products.**  
Healthy habits are developed over time. There are no fast fixes or instant cures. Claims that sound too good to be true most likely are! Be careful of catchy claims that try to sell you a special product.
- ✓ **The information follows *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.**  
Be aware of claims that advise you not to eat from one or more food groups. Scientific studies show that you need to eat a variety of foods from all of the four food groups to meet your nutrient needs.

# Less than Meets the Eye

You may get nutrition advice from all sorts of people such as personal trainers, health food store staff and self-proclaimed nutritionists. Not all of the information and advice will be reliable and credible. Here are some ways to help you spot misinformation.

## Misuse of Scientific Language

The wording of health claims for products tend to be non-specific. Terms such as "detoxify", "cleanse the body", "stimulate the immune system" or "balance the body's chemistry" are a sure sign that you are dealing with a deceptive source.

## Invalid Diagnostic Tests

Here are examples of diagnostic tests to determine nutritional deficiencies that sound scientific but are considered unreliable and some may be harmful to your health:

- ⊗ **Hair Analysis** – a hair sample test
- ⊗ **Iridology** (Iris Diagnosis) – an eye exam
- ⊗ **Cytotoxic Testing** (Bryan's Test, Metabolic Intolerance Test, or Sensitivity Testing) – a blood test
- ⊗ **Live Cell Analysis** (Dark-field Video Analysis, Nutritional Blood Analysis) – a blood sample exam under a microscope
- ⊗ **Herbal Crystallization Analysis** (Saliva Crystallization Analysis) – a saliva sample test

## Questionable Prescriptions

Based on the results of their "diagnosis", they prescribe and want to sell you a supplement that may include vitamins, minerals, enzymes, herbs and protein or amino acid mixtures. They may offer a "special" or "secret" diet formula. If they are selling a product and making a profit from selling the product directly to you, question the advice. There may be serious harm from vitamin or mineral overdose and herbal poisoning.

## Putting Down the Food Supply

The following arguments are false:

- ⊗ Food processing causes our food supply to be less nutritious
- ⊗ Our soil is depleted causing foods to be less nutritious
- ⊗ Food additives and preservatives are poisonous
- ⊗ Pasteurization destroys the nutrients in milk

These arguments are often used as reasons to prescribe nutrition supplements.

## Credentials

They obtain and display credentials not recognized by responsible scientists or educators. For example, registered nutrition consultants, nutrition experts and certified nutritionists sound like they are reliable sources, but their education is not recognized.

Registered dietitians are recognized as qualified practitioners. The term 'dietitian' is protected by law to ensure that only those who have met the national educational standards and who live up to the Code of Ethics for the Dietetic Profession in Canada can use this title. Look for the professional designation 'RD' to know you are speaking to a registered dietitian.

For more ways to help you spot questionable nutrition information, visit the website [www.quackwatch.org](http://www.quackwatch.org)

# Some Common Nutrition Myths

## Myth 1: Carbohydrates are fattening

**Fact:** Carbohydrates are not fattening. Eating too much of any food can lead to weight gain. Plain breads, pasta, rice cereal, potatoes and corn are some of the lowest fat foods around! Watch the portion sizes of carbohydrates, as well as the spreads or sauces that add extra calories and fat. Don't be fooled by the latest low carbohydrate and high protein diets. These diets are often high in saturated fat and low in fibre. This may cause you to feel nauseous, dehydrated and constipated.

## Myth 2: I can't eat milk products if I'm lactose intolerant

**Fact:** Many people who are lactose intolerance can handle some milk products. Hard cheese, such as cheddar, contains almost no lactose. Yogourt has an enzyme that digests most of the lactose in the yogourt. You may also be able to tolerate small amounts of milk. Try 4-6 oz (125-180 ml) with meals. Lactose-reduced milk products or lactose-digesting enzymes and tablets are other options.

## Myth 3: Eating fat is bad for my health

**Fact:** Some people have a fat-phobic attitude without understanding that fat is an essential nutrient for good health. Eating some fat is important because it provides energy, essential fatty acids not produced by the body, and helps with the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. These are only a few of the important roles of fat in our bodies. However, a diet that is too high in fat, can result in too many calories, and may lead to weight-gain, an increased risk for heart disease and diabetes (especially if you

are not physically active). Your dietary intake of fat should be between 20-35% of your total calories for the day. That means that if you eat 2000 calories per day, you should be consuming about 44-77 grams of fat per day. Choose monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (including omega-3 fats) more often and saturated and trans fat less often.

## The Bottom Line

Be critical of nutrition information and advice that is not from a trusted source.

There is also no substitute for a healthy diet. Following a healthy eating plan based on **Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating** will provide the energy and nutrients you need. For a copy of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* and other nutrition information, contact a Public Health Dietitian at Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.



## Websites You Can Trust

More and more Canadians are turning to the internet to find health information. In fact, the internet is now the second most common source of health information for Canadians, ranking ahead of radio, television, and newspapers. Only face-to-face contact with a health professional is more common than the internet.

Be careful of phony public service sites. You can identify these because along with the nutrition information, they will try to sell you a product.



Here are examples of credible nutrition related websites:

Organization	Website
Allergy and Asthma Information Association	<a href="http://www.aaia.ca">www.aaia.ca</a>
American Dietetic Association	<a href="http://www.eatright.org">www.eatright.org</a>
Arbor Nutrition Guide	<a href="http://www.arborcom.com">www.arborcom.com</a>
Canadian Cancer Society	<a href="http://www.cancer.ca">www.cancer.ca</a>
Canadian Diabetes Association	<a href="http://www.diabetes.ca">www.diabetes.ca</a>
Canadian Health Network	<a href="http://www.canadian-health-network.ca">www.canadian-health-network.ca</a>
Canadian Produce Marketing Association	<a href="http://www.cpma.ca">www.cpma.ca</a>
Centre for Science in the Public Interest	<a href="http://www.cspinet.org">www.cspinet.org</a>
Dial-a-Dietitian	<a href="http://www.dialadietitian.org">www.dialadietitian.org</a>
Dietitians of Canada	<a href="http://www.dietitians.ca">www.dietitians.ca</a>
Health Canada (Nutrition Resources)	<a href="http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition">www.hc-sc.gc.ca/nutrition</a>
Healthy Weight Network	<a href="http://www.healthyweight.net">www.healthyweight.net</a>
Heart and Stroke Foundation	<a href="http://www.heartandstroke.ca">www.heartandstroke.ca</a>
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Health Tools)	<a href="http://www.healthyontario.com">www.healthyontario.com</a>
National 5 to 10 a Day Program	<a href="http://www.5to10aday.com">www.5to10aday.com</a>
National Eating Disorder Information Centre	<a href="http://www.nedic.ca">www.nedic.ca</a>
National Institute of Nutrition	<a href="http://www.nin.ca">www.nin.ca</a>
Nutrition Labelling Education Centre	<a href="http://www.healthyeatingisinstore.ca">www.healthyeatingisinstore.ca</a>
Osteoporosis Society of Canada	<a href="http://www.osteoporosis.ca">www.osteoporosis.ca</a>
Quackwatch	<a href="http://www.quackwatch.org">www.quackwatch.org</a>
Tufts University Nutrition Navigator	<a href="http://www.navigator.tufts.edu">www.navigator.tufts.edu</a>
University of Guelph (Food Safety Network)	<a href="http://www.foodsafetynetwork.ca">www.foodsafetynetwork.ca</a>
USDA Food and Nutrition Information Centre	<a href="http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic">www.nal.usda.gov/fnic</a>
York Region Services (Public Health & Safety)	<a href="http://www.region.york.on.ca/services">www.region.york.on.ca/services</a>
York Region Heart Health Program	<a href="http://www.heartyparty.com">www.heartyparty.com</a>

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