

Wellness Advocate

Smarter Healthcare Solutions

Debunking Common Health Myths

Some are silly; some are serious; all are wildly overstated at best. Here's the real deal about a 'faker's dozen'.

#1 Myth:
Cancer is America's No. 1 killer.

Reality: More Americans die of heart disease than from cancer. The good news is that heart trouble, even more than cancer, can often be avoided with lifestyle changes. Quit smoking, cut back on red meat, exercise regularly and maintain a healthy weight, and you'll significantly reduce your risks.

#2 Myth:
Don't swallow your gum! It stays in your stomach for seven years!

Reality: While gum is not digestible, it does not linger in the stomach.

#3 Myth:
By eating only low-fat foods, you will lose weight.

Reality: Low-fat food isn't necessarily low-calorie. It may have lots of sugar, for example, and all excess calories eventually show up around your waist. "Low-fat" isn't a license to eat triple-sized portions, either. For instance, 8 ounces of low-fat frozen yogurt has about as many calories as 4 ounces of full-fat ice cream. A better strategy is to watch fat and portion size.

#4 Myth:
Colds or flu are at their most contagious before you notice any symptoms.

Reality: Colds and flu are most contagious when your symptoms are at their worst. While you should wash your hands frequently and take other preventative steps throughout the life of an illness, you should be especially vigilant when the symptoms are at their worst.

#5 Myth:
To get an adequate level of antioxidants, you need to take supplements.

Reality: Eat a diet rich in fruits and vegetables of various colors and you'll get plenty of antioxidants. Bright red berries, dark leafy greens and peppers in a rainbow of colors all deliver loads of them, and they're tastier than supplements of Vitamins C and E.

#6 Myth:
Eating turkey makes you sleepy.

Reality: Turkey does contain the amino acid tryptophan, which has been shown to aid sleep. But it doesn't contain much of the compound, and no more than found in chicken or ground beef. Yet no one claims hamburgers make them sleepy.



QuickTakes

What Are The Basic Ingredients In Your Recipe To Better Health?

To create a delicious meal, a top chef starts with trusted basic ingredients. You too should start with basic ingredients when creating a healthy life.

- **Healthy Eating** - Your body takes nutrients from the food you eat and uses them to support all of your body's functions. What you eat plays an important role in your overall health.
- **Physical Activity** - Not only is it needed for weight control, but your heart, lungs, muscles and mind will all benefit from being active.
- **Stress Management** - Studies have shown that as chronic stress continues, it may provoke insomnia, exhaustion, stomach acid, irritability, sexual dysfunction, infertility or heart disease. Learning how to manage your stress will help improve your health.
- **Stop Smoking** - Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. If you smoke, stopping can be the most important thing you do to improve your health.
- **Get a Good Night's Sleep** - Lack of sleep can have many negative health effects. Getting your nightly Z's will help keep you at your best.

INSIDE:
Debunking Health Myths

Recipe:
Ecuadorian Hominy & Bean Soup

Debunking Common Health Myths *(continued)*

#7 Myth:

The more you weigh, the fewer the calories you burn.

Reality: A heavier person actually has to work harder to move his or her weight around and thus burns more calories than a thinner person. For instance, a 250-lb. person who walks a mile may burn twice as many calories as a 125-lb. person, regardless of the pace.

#8 Myth:

It's better to drink alcohol than do drugs.

Reality: Alcohol is the most frequently abused drug in the world, and is responsible for more deaths annually than all illicit drugs combined. Alcohol-related problems account for 20% to 40% of all hospital admissions.

#9 Myth:

Taking ginkgo supplements will slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease & dementia.

Reality: Extracts prepared from ginkgo leaves have been claimed to improve

blood flow to the brain. This hope was quashed in 2008 by the results of a large study in which 3,000 elderly people received either a daily dose of ginkgo or a dummy pill. After more than six years of follow-up, the ginkgo supplement did not help to prevent dementia. A healthy diet combined with plenty of activity—both physical and mental—is a far better investment.

#10 Myth:

We'd all be thinner if we just ate more protein.

Reality: Eat too many calories and you'll gain weight, whether you eat carbohydrates, protein or fat. Americans already eat more protein than just about any group in the world, and we're among the most obese. In Asia, diets are much lower in protein, yet obesity is rare. And which region do you think has less cancer and heart disease? If you said the U.S., guess again.

#11 Myth:

Eating grapefruit burns calories.

Reality: The American Dietetic Association states that "this long-held

myth is just wishful thinking. Digestion of any food uses a small amount of energy. But no food can 'burn-up' calories or 'melt away' body fat. If you lose weight when you add grapefruit to your eating plan, it's probably because you're substituting it for another food that has more calories."

#12 Myth:

I can greatly improve my diet just by cutting out red meat.

Reality: Not so fast. A "junk-food" diet without red meat is still junk. If you switch from burgers every night to pizza every night, you're just changing the source of your saturated fat from meat to dairy. The best way to improve your diet is to eat more fruits and vegetables and favor lean proteins such as fish and chicken breast. If you eat red meat, choose leaner cuts.

#13 Myth:

Cracking your knuckles will give you arthritis.

Reality: Knuckle cracking sounds awful, but it's harmless – nothing more than an air bubble popping in the synovial fluid of your joints. About 25 percent of people in the United States are chronic crackers.

Ecuadorian Hominy & Bean Soup Makes: 6 servings | 30 minutes



In Ecuador, a proper dinner always begins with a hot soup. The ingredients vary with the seasons and the location, but the emphasis on freshness and flavor is always apparent.

Ingredients:

2 ears fresh corn (or 1 1/3 cups frozen corn kernels)
Olive oil cooking spray
1 medium onion, chopped
1 large carrot, diced
1 red bell pepper, diced
5 cloves garlic, smashed and chopped
1 1/2 Teaspoons ground cumin
6 cups low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
1/2 Teaspoon salt
1 15-ounce can hominy, rinsed and drained
1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup frozen baby lima beans, thawed
Optional garnishes: chopped fresh cilantro, commercial chunky salsa or chopped sweet pickled onions

Preparation:

1. With a serrated knife, cut corn from cobs, reserving kernels and corn cobs. (If using frozen corn, thaw under running water.) Set aside.
2. Spray a large, heavy saucepan with cooking spray and place over medium heat. Add onions, carrots, bell peppers and garlic. Cook, stirring, until just tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Stir in cumin and cook for 1 minute. Add broth, corn kernels and cobs, and salt. Bring the soup to a gentle boil. Lower the heat to medium-low and simmer for 5 minutes.
4. Stir in hominy, black beans and lima beans. Cover and cook over medium-low heat for 10 minutes.
5. Using tongs, remove the cobs from saucepan and discard. Ladle the soup into bowls. If desired, offer the optional garnishes on the side.

Nutritional Information *(per serving)*:

176 Calories; 1g Fat; 0.1g Saturated fat; 9g Protein; 36g Carbohydrate; 8g Fiber; 525mg Sodium