

Healthy Hints

When it comes to making your family happy and healthy, there's no time to spend messing around. There are a lot of food myths and activity myths out there, and so it's easy to be confused about what to listen to. With the help of these mythbusters, you will soon become expert at telling right from wrong.

Myth 1 : Healthy food is just too expensive!

Loads of people think this is true, but it's actually more likely you will find a lot of cheap healthy meal ideas that help save you money. You just need to be clever about it.

- Buy what's local and in season.
- Make meat go further in casseroles or stir-fries by mixing it with cheaper healthy alternatives such as beans, pulses and frozen veg.
- Cook batches of dishes such as chilli, curry or stew, and freeze them in handy sizes. Then you will have a cheap healthy meal that will last and last.

Myth 2 : I can never eat a cooked breakfast again!

The full English breakfast, if you fry it all in fat, will be bad for you. However, the basic ingredients can actually make quite a healthy breakfast.

- Grill lean bacon, cook the eggs without much fat and include baked beans (compare the labels on two varieties and go for the lowest in sugar and salt) grilled tomatoes and grilled mushrooms, then serve it with wholemeal bread.
- Then you'll have yourself a delicious cooked breakfast the family can enjoy that is also healthy and balanced.

Myth 3: I shouldn't give fruit or veg if my child didn't like it the first time

We all know children can be fussy eaters, but they also need to get their nutrients. Here's some tips to get kids to eat vegetables.

- Offer new food to children as often as possible.
- If they refuse the food, wait a few days then try again.
- If your child really doesn't want to eat certain fruit and vegetables, you could try different types instead, or mix them with foods they already like such as low fat yoghurt, rice or mashed potato.
- You could also encourage children to help you prepare new foods - research suggests this helps them be more likely to try them.
- Try not to have fights about food because this often just makes matters worse.

Myth 4 : Dried, tinned or frozen fruit is not as healthy as fresh fruit.

Most of us know that as part of a healthy balanced diet we should be eating at least five portions of fruit and veg each day. But what a lot of us don't know is that these can be fresh fruits, frozen fruits, canned fruits, dried fruits, tinned fruits or juiced fruit. And the same goes for vegetables. Good news, huh?

Myth 5 : Missing breakfast is a good way to lose weight.

Breakfast is such an important meal. This is because when we're asleep, we are also 'fasting' for about eight hours, so it's pretty important to 'break' this by having some food when we get up. Here's some of the effects of skipping breakfast.

- People who skip breakfast are unlikely to catch up on all the vitamins and minerals having breakfast provides later on in the day.
- If we miss out on breakfast, this often makes us feel hungry later on, so we can end up snacking by mid-morning on foods that are high in sugar or fat.

So, skipping breakfast often ends up being more unhealthy than having a good breakfast in the first place!

Myth 6 : The salt we add at the table is most of the salt we eat.

You may think so, but actually 75% of the salt in our diet comes from processed foods. Just 10 to 15% comes from salt we add when we're cooking or at the table. On average we're currently eating about 8.6g of salt a day. To be healthier and have a more low salt diet, we need to cut this down to:

- no more than 6g of salt a day for people over 11,
- 5 grams for 7 to 10 year olds,
- 3 grams for 4 to 6 year olds,
- just 2 grams for 1 to 3 year olds.

Myth 7 : Processed foods are not as healthy for me as fresh foods.

In some cases this is true, but a lot of processed foods are just as healthy, and sometimes even more healthy than fresh foods. This all depends on how they are processed.

- For example, frozen fruit and frozen vegetables are usually processed within hours of being picked. Because hardly any nutrients get lost in the freezing process they stay very healthy.
- They are often cheaper for you to buy too, which makes them a fantastic option to help make up your 5 A DAY

Myth 8 : If I don't exercise really hard all the time, it's a waste of time.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. Even moderate exercise, such as walking, gardening, playing games, dancing or doing other fun things can have fantastic benefits.

- Gardening for as little as an hour a week could reduce the risk of heart disease. So just imagine what taking a Boogie Break or walking the kids to school could do!
- We all need to try for 60 active minutes a day, but there are lots of easy ways to make this up, you might be already doing some!

Myth 9 : I only need to exercise if I'm overweight.

A lot of people think the only reason to exercise is to lose weight, but this simply isn't true. Physical activity not only helps you look better, exercise gives energy, helps you manage stress and anxiety, and can lift mild to moderate depression, all things that can make life easier for today's busy kids. Even if a person is slim, they still need exercise just as much as others to keep healthy and keep cholesterol levels down.