

Perryman nutrition column: The magic of myth

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Spring can be a motivating factor to trim those extra pounds that crept on during the winter. Kudos to those of you who are planning to lose those pounds sensibly by eating healthier: it's easy to buy into the latest trend diet with hopes of seeing extra pounds effortlessly shed … Unfortunately, what's in the media or advertised on TV doesn't always represent the facts, what's healthy or a realistic picture of results.

Check out the following myths to see if your ability to sort myths from truth is fine-tuned:

• Grapefruit diet. The grapefruit diet has been around forever. The claim is that eating grapefruit at every meal burns off extra calories. Eating fresh grapefruit has been shown to help slow the progression of atherosclerosis (a common disease that causes plaque to form inside arteries and obstruct bloodflow) and help lower blood cholesterol.

However, research has not shown a direct correlation between eating grapefruit at every meal and weight loss. As much as you may want to melt away the fat, don't look to grapefruit for magic. Instead, eat grapefruit as the low-calorie, high-fiber, nutritious and quick-to-fix fruit it is. And, remember it is a good strategy to eat fruit instead of drinking juice to get the benefits of fiber in fruit.

• Aspartame. While trying to cut calories and make healthy choices you may have concerns about aspartame, an artificial sweetener used in diet soft drinks, yogurt and other foods. The latest evidence

shows that by choosing this lower calorie sweetener you will not have an increase in appetite. It does not contribute to weight gain either. In spite of information circulating on the internet, the latest research also shows that aspartame does not harm healthy people. If you choose to use aspartame as a strategy to cut calories, you should do so without concern for your health according to the American Dietetic Association.

• Fortified foods. Be careful not to cut good nutrition out of your diet while you're cutting calories. Choosing heavily fortified foods chock full of vitamins may be an avenue to make up for what you think is left out of your diet, but all those added vitamins in highly processed foods don't cancel out the added sugar and fat food manufacturers use to make those foods that are advertised as 'good for you' taste yummy.

• Fruits and vegetables. Even people who know that fruits and veggies are healthy and naturally lower in calories may not be fruit and vegetable eaters. A new trend has brought many options with a full serving of fruits and veggies in a bottle to the grocery store. Look closely at the label to determine if the pretty picture on the label translates into the real deal or is the bottle primarily fruit juice--usually apple, grape or pear--from a concentrate plus flavorings? For the best [nutrition](#) and lowest calories, choose the whole, fresh fruits and veggies instead of juice concentrates and flavorings.

• Processed foods. It's true that healthier foods are those which are processed as little as possible. If the extra packaging didn't convince you that a food is processed, look at the ingredient label. If the list is long and includes many words you can't pronounce or you don't know, you can likely conclude the food is processed.

And, don't be fooled by the term 'natural' on the extra packaging. The use of the word 'natural' on a food label is not regulated unless it's on a package that contains meat or poultry -- otherwise, it can be used with

questionable credibility on a product. When used on a package with meat or poultry, it means that the product doesn't contain artificial flavoring, coloring or a chemical preservative and is only minimally processed.

• Sugar. Americans average 475 calories a day from sugar added into food they eat. The American Heart Association recommends a maximum of 100 extra sugar calories for women and 150 for men a day.

The source of all that extra sugar is often high fructose corn syrup or HFCS. Many Americans are more concerned about the source of sugar than they are about the added calories. High fructose corn syrup is about half fructose and half glucose. Table sugar, often considered a better choice, is sucrose which is broken down in the body to fructose and glucose. Once it is metabolized in the body, high fructose corn syrup and table sugar are the same.

The latest research shows that pure fructose can raise triglyceride levels in the body. This can be harmful to your heart, but most sweeteners- brown rice syrup, evaporated cane juice, honey, raw sugar, barley malt syrup, agave nectar, coconut palm sugar and fruit juice concentrates-are a combination of fructose and glucose.

What does this mean? The prudent thing to do is to cut back on total added sugar, which has no nutritional benefit, from all forms to minimize calories and make room for more nutritious choices.

Provided by Colorado State University

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