



# DEBUNKING NUTRITION AND EXERCISE MYTHS

## *Myth 1: BMI and weight are a good indicator of health.*

**Fact:** Health and body weight are determined by a complex set of metabolic, physiological, cultural, social and behavior determinates, many of which are out of our control. BMI was created in the 1830's by an astronomer and was never meant to be an indication of individual health.

## *Myth 2: Calories in equals calories out.*

**Fact:** The calories we consume and the energy we expend are influenced by a complex set of factors. Appetite, usable energy consumed, stress levels, sleep quality, hormones, gut microbiome and more all influence food consumption. Factors that influence calories burned include the macronutrient makeup of the food, genetic factors, dieting history, sleep quality, age, activity intensity and duration, lean body mass, hormonal status and more.

## *Myth 3: Following people on social media that are fit, lean and provide diet advice is a way to stay motivated with your health goals.*

**Fact:** The best-known environmental contributor to the development of eating disorders is the sociocultural idealization of thinness. Following social media accounts that promote joyful movement, body neutrality and sustainable eating practices better support long-term health.

## *Myth 4: Dieting can lead to long-term weight loss.*

**Fact:** While some diets are associated with short-term weight loss, 95-98% of people regain the weight back in five years and 2/3 of those people will regain more weight back than they started with. Dieting history is a significant indicator of future weight gain. A non-restrictive eating plan promotes long-term health.

## *Myth 5: Fresh foods are more nutritious.*

**Fact:** Frozen and canned fruits and vegetables are picked at the peak of ripeness and preserved immediately after harvesting, meaning they can actually be more nutritious than out of season fresh produce. This is because fresh produce grown out of season has to be transported long distances, which can degrade certain micronutrients.

## *Myth 6: You need to look a certain way to have an eating disorder and be "sick enough".*

**Fact:** Anorexia nervosa can be characterized by a significantly low body weight which is portrayed as the typical "look" of an eating disorder. But in reality, anorexia nervosa only makes up 3% of total eating disorder diagnoses. Binge eating disorder makes up 47%, bulimia nervosa makes up 12% and other specified feeding and eating disorders make up the rest. Eating disorders don't have a typical "look".

## *Myth 7: Gluten is often the cause of gastrointestinal issues and following a gluten-free diet can decrease them.*

**Fact:** Some people have been diagnosed with Celiac disease (a wheat allergy that requires them to avoid consuming gluten). If you haven't been diagnosed with this, removing gluten and/or wheat from your diet can actually be detrimental. Enriched wheat products are a major source of whole grains, proteins and B-vitamins and minerals. Many things can cause GI distress, such as mood-related disorders like anxiety and depression and food restriction.

## *Myth 8: Tracking calories and calculating total daily intake is recommended to maintain weight and monitor health.*

**Fact:** Did you know that calories reported on nutrition fact labels have a margin of error of up to 20 percent? Additionally, estimated energy (calorie) requirements do not consider genetics, fat-free mass, hormonal responses, medications, socioeconomic status and culture - all of which impact weight and calorie needs.

### ***Myth 9: No pain, no gain.***

**Fact:** This phrase typically refers to the need to complete an exercise or activity to the point that you feel physical pain in order to achieve benefits associated with exercise (e.g., increased strength or muscle mass). Neuromuscular adaptations and muscular hypertrophy are necessary to increase strength and/or muscle mass, but are not based on pain, but rather determined by proper planning and programming, sound movement techniques and consistency.

### ***Myth 10: More sweat = more weight loss.***

**Fact:** The amount you sweat from a workout isn't an indicator of increased fat or weight loss. Factors that contribute to more sweat are temperature, humidity, genetics, weight, hydration status, gender, age, and fitness level (to name a few). Sweat indicates that your body is regulating its temperature.

### ***Myth 11: If we burn more calories, we earn more calories later.***

**Fact:** Only giving yourself permission to consume calories or certain foods based on your workouts is detrimental to your relationship with your body and with food. Giving yourself unconditional permission to eat how much and what you want leads to pleasure and satisfaction, whereas food "rules" typically result in disordered thoughts and behaviors surrounding food.

### ***Myth 12: You burn more calories if you exercise before eating.***

**Fact:** The total amount of energy that is used during a fasted workout is comparable to the energy needed for a workout after eating a snack or meal. What typically changes is how you mentally and physically feel during a workout if you haven't eaten for hours prior. If you don't have enough energy (food) prior to your workout, you might have lower motivation to complete the activity and increased perceived exertion rate.

### ***Myth 13: Doing more cardio means you'll lose more weight.***

**Fact:** While exercise does benefit your mental and physical health, it does not mean weight loss. Our bodies regulate weight using countless metabolic cues. Exercise acts as just one of those clues, by impacting the hormones that influence our weight. We were designed to maintain a weight that is most biologically comfortable, based on biological and social factors. Long story short, health isn't determined by weight and you should only participate in cardio-related activities if you enjoy them.

### ***Myth 14: The number of calories burned listed on gym equipment is accurate.***

**Fact:** To determine calorie expenditure accurately, you would need an indirect calorimetry machine to calculate the production of carbon dioxide and the consumption of oxygen. Gym equipment that estimates calories burned is extremely inaccurate because it is not taking into consideration someone's muscle mass, height, weight, stress-level, ethnicity, medication use and more!

### ***Myth 15: Workouts should be at least one hour.***

**Fact:** Our bodies benefit from movement, but these benefits aren't tied to one-hour workouts each day. Movement and physical activity benefit our mental and brain health, strengthens bones and muscles, improves ability to do everyday activities, reduces stress and so much more. Small bouts of movement like walking or dancing in your bedroom for 20 minutes still provide health benefits!

### ***Myth 16: You must exercise every day.***

**Fact:** Our bodies require rest to feel mentally and physically strong. Everyone, no matter if you are an elite athlete or enjoy walking in nature, needs rest. If you are interested in increasing strength, your muscle fibers require rest to rebuild and grow stronger following a workout.