Food Facts

Versus

Fads

DISCARD

Federal Cooperative Extension Service
Oregon State College - Corvallis
Questions and answers about nutrition

Food Facts
There is no field of knowledge in which there are so many self-appointed advisers as in health and food cures. Increased interest in reducing weight and increased fear of heart disease have brought a flurry of searching for the answers. As a result, special diets and special foods are often featured—with fantastic claims.

Food fads flourish because faddists and quacks outshout the reliable sources of nutrition information at colleges, universities, research centers and state health departments.

Food faddists and food quacks are closely related. Probably every food faddist is somewhat of a food quack in that he fervently desires to convert everybody to his way of eating. He is an apostle of a pet idea.

The food quack is not necessarily a food faddist. He may practice his own fads while he sells them to others—or he may laugh at his victims while he enjoys his normal diet.

The sincere food faddist is usually a person unduly concerned with dietary health. The food quack is a cynical promoter.
How can you identify food faddists and quacks?

- They undermine the public's confidence in the nation's food supply with such phrases as "depleted soil" and "starved" vegetables.
- They attack the Food and Drug Administration, the American Medical Association, public health organizations and recognized nutrition authorities.
- They scare people about their health. They have pills, booklets or health plans that will fit everyone. Their approach is emotional rather than factual.
- They often have something to sell, usually at a tremendous profit.
- They make extravagant claims for the products they sell.
- They partially quote authoritative information or misuse it to their own advantage.

But, besides fooling people, food quacks may endanger their health. For example, food supplements are expensive and may be harmful if used too freely. Commonly used food supplements include vitamin, mineral and protein concentrates. Glamourized names give them special appeal. Before buying food supplements, ask your doctor if you need them.

Food fads become popular because people want a simple answer to food and health problems. They want special foods that have magical properties. Unfortunately, it is not quite that simple. Nutritionists have been working to make food information easy to use, but they will never find a formula that is as simple as say—adding wheat germ to the diet. The facts just won't arrange themselves that conveniently. However, the
nutritionists have come up with a basic food plan for you to follow. It is given on page 14.

One of the most important things in selecting foods is to build good food habits. After a while, they will become natural. Then you’ll have your own automatic pilot to guide you in food choice.

Nutritionists, home economists, and physicians oppose food fads. Some fads are harmless, but others can prevent your getting a well-balanced diet, or are outrageously expensive. These professional people get their facts about food and nutrition from carefully conducted research. There is no similar scientific background to the food fads.

Our nation’s food supply is safeguarded by laws and inspection of food for wholesomeness. These safeguards are not yet perfect, but there is little chance that any of the food at the grocery store is unwholesome. These laws control the use of chemicals used to preserve food, additives to enrich food, etc. All of these processes must be safe.

Weight Reduction

Do all people need to lose weight?
No. Do not take height-weight tables as the final answer. Body build is an important factor. Consult your physician.

Should all fats be avoided in a reducing diet?
No. Some fat is needed for good health. Fats also have a satisfying quality which keeps you from getting hungry too quickly.
Are quick reducing diets all right?

No. Weight losses through quick reduction diets are seldom maintained. A person who tends to gain weight easily will probably need to modify his food and activity patterns for the rest of his life. He must be sure that the food he eats furnishes the protein, minerals and vitamins he needs for good health along with the restricted calories. Quick weight loss is often loss of body water, not permanent loss of body fat.

Is on-and-off dieting harmful?

There is evidence to show that each time excess weight is regained, there may be damage to the heart and blood vessels.

Why do some low calorie diets result in little weight loss?

If a dieter reduces his activity as he reduces his food intake, or if he is already inactive, a low calorie diet alone may be ineffective. He still is eating more calories than he needs.

What about crutches like appetite depressants and high bulk substances?

These should be used only with a physician's approval. They may be a temporary, but expensive, help in starting a reducing diet.

A dieter usually needs a new interest to occupy his mind so that he will not think of food so much. It is especially helpful if his new interest includes increased physical activity such as gardening, walking or swimming.

Are any foods particularly important in a reducing diet?

Yes. A person on a low calorie diet needs all of the food groups required in a
normal diet. He should use less of the foods which are high in calories and low in other food values: fats, sugars and starches. Protein foods such as eggs, meat, milk, cheese, dried peas and beans give a satisfying quality to the diet. Vegetables and fruits are essential for the minerals and vitamins they contain and for bulk.

Does skipping breakfast or lunch help in losing weight?
No. Regular meals are important. Meal skipping is a poor way to lose weight. It increases appetite for between-meal snacks or for the next meal. This tends to result in unbalanced diets.

Sweeteners

Is raw sugar better than white sugar?
No. Raw sugar contains traces of impurities.

Is blackstrap molasses a superior food?
No. It does have some nutritive value, but not all that is sometimes claimed for it. The mineral salts of potassium and magnesium it contains are plentiful in the average diet. Much of the iron and copper content is due to contamination from the metallic parts of the food processing plant. Part of this is in the form of insoluble rust which has no value as food.

Does honey have special food values?
Honey is a wholesome food but it has no special curative properties. It furnishes the body with sugar and small amounts of vitamins and minerals. It is a concentrated sugar.
Cereals and Breads

Is wheat germ a magic food?
No. Wheat germ contains B vitamins, minerals and some protein. In large quantities it may cause digestive upset.

Is bleached white flour harmful?
No. White flour contains no injurious substances.

Is enriched flour better than plain flour?
Yes. Enriched flour contains added iron and B vitamins in amounts according to standards set up by the federal government.

Are whole grain products better than white enriched flour?
Both are good products. In some cases, the vitamin and mineral forms used to enrich white flour are more readily used by the body than those in the whole grain product.

Is it wise to grind wheat at home?
Why go to the expense of buying a mill? Modern commercial mills put out excellent products which are both safe and nutritious.

Milk and Dairy Foods

Is milk produced in the Pacific Northwest lower in calcium than milk in other parts of the United States?
No. The calcium content of milk in the Pacific Northwest is not different from that of milk produced in other parts of the United States.
Do adults need milk?
Yes. You never outgrow your need for milk. It is expensive and impractical to have a balanced diet without milk and milk products.

Does homogenizing milk destroy its food value?
No. The vitamins, minerals, and protein which are contained in milk are not affected by homogenizing. The fat content is the same as that of whole milk.

Is raw milk more nutritious than pasteurized milk?
Pasteurization has no effect on nutrients for which milk is important—calcium, protein and riboflavin. It leaves milk with a little less vitamin C and thiamine, but present-day methods of high-temperature, short-time pasteurization destroy little of these two vitamins.

Health departments and the dairy industry do not recommend the use of raw milk. Raw milk may contain germs that cause undulant fever, tuberculosis, septic sore throat or other infections—even with all the care taken to keep cows healthy and milk clean.

Does light destroy food values in milk?
Yes, riboflavin is destroyed by light. Refrigerate milk immediately after purchase or delivery. Keep in a cool, dark place to preserve this vitamin.

Does drying milk lower its food value?
Only water is removed from pasteurized milk when whole dry milk is made. When non-fat dry milk solids are made, fat and the vitamin A in the fat are also removed.

Is margarine less fattening than butter?
No. The caloric content of butter and margarine is the same.
Is butter easier to digest than margarine?  
No. Research has shown that the body digests and uses all food fats equally well.  

Why is vitamin A added to margarine?  
Since margarine is used by some families as a spread, margarine is now fortified with vitamin A in an amount similar to that in butter.

Why is vitamin D added to milk?  
Vitamin D helps the body use calcium and phosphorus. Vitamin D is added to evaporated milk as well as to fresh fluid milk. In recent years, the use of vitamin D milk and vitamin D concentrates for infants and children has greatly reduced the number of cases of rickets.

Is yogurt a magic food?  
No. Yogurt is manufactured from whole milk and is fermented to make a thickened product rather like buttermilk. It is more expensive than buttermilk or clabbered milk, but has similar food value.

Meats and Poultry

Is extra meat good for people?  
Before increasing protein much beyond that recommended in the Daily Four (page 14) consult your doctor.

Are antibiotic dips used to increase shelf-life of dressed poultry harmful?  
No. Tests at experiment stations show that cooking destroys the antibiotic activity. If antibiotics are used, packages are so labeled.

Is horse meat a good food?  
Yes. When it is government inspected and handled under sanitary conditions.
Vegetables and Fruits

Are frozen vegetables better than canned ones?
When cooked and served properly there is very little difference in the vitamin content of these two products. Flavor, color and texture differences, however, are better in some frozen vegetables, especially the leafy and green ones.

Is frozen citrus juice as good as fresh for vitamin C?
Yes. Frozen and fresh juices are similar.

Are vegetable juices as good as the vegetables themselves?
No. Whole vegetables supply bulk which is important in the diet.

Does the so-called waterless cooker help vegetables keep food values?
The method of cooking, not the pan, is the important factor. Use very little liquid, a tight fitting lid and a short cooking time.

Is treatment of citrus fruits, apples or pears with chemicals to reduce mold and rot harmful to people?
No. The method has been tested and found harmless by the Food and Drug Administration.

Does “starved” soil produce vegetables low in food value?
No. Experiments show that “starved” soil may produce a smaller crop but that its food value is not lessened.
Are vegetables grown with chemical fertilizers safe?

Yes. Since chemical fertilizers are made from “natural” rock, there is practically no difference. Plants use the minerals they need from either source, chemical or natural.

Is canned food poisoned when refrigerated in the opened can?

No. Modern methods of treating cans make possible safe storage of food in these containers. The food should be covered. Sometimes an acid fruit darkens the can around the edge. This is not poisonous though there may be an effect on flavor.

Are there harmful insecticide residues on fruits and vegetables in the markets?

Fruits and vegetables raised in our state for commercial sale are carefully inspected by the United States Department of Agriculture to ensure freedom from spray residue. All insecticides recommended for use are thoroughly investigated first by state, then federal authorities.

Are sprayed fruits and vegetables from the home garden safe to use?

Read carefully the directions on the spray container and follow these directions closely for a safe food supply.

Miscellaneous

Do most people need to buy vitamins and minerals in pills and powders?

No. Nutritional authorities agree that the best way to buy vitamins and minerals is in foods themselves—vegetables, fruits,
milk, eggs, meats, fish and whole grain or enriched bread and cereals. **Why use any food that has had minerals and vitamins added?**

Iodized salt, vitamin D milk, cereals enriched with B vitamins and iron, and margarine fortified with vitamin A are inexpensive sources of nutrients for people who may otherwise lack them. **Does adding iodine to table salt improve health?**

Yes. The occurrence of simple goiter has been markedly reduced by the use of iodized salt in areas where water and soil are low in iodine. In some parts of the Pacific Northwest iodine is low. **Will eating fats cause heart disease?**

This is not definitely proven. However, there is considerable evidence to indicate that population groups which eat high fat diets have higher incidence of hardening of the arteries. Other types of heart disease are not known to be influenced by diet. **Are foods cooked in aluminum ware harmful?**

No. Aluminum salts come from the pan in extremely small amounts and small amounts are not harmful. **Should brewer's yeast be a daily supplement?**

No. If a well-balanced diet is eaten, the vitamin B group will be adequately supplied without any supplement. **Does brewer's yeast promote breast feeding or make it more successful?**

No. A nursing mother who increases her daily intake of milk to 1½ quarts with a generous serving of meat—plus fruits and vegetables—will be taking in the nutrients she needs for breast feeding.
The Daily Four Food Groups are the framework of an adequate daily food plan. The minimum number of servings listed form a foundation for a good diet. To round out meals and to satisfy the appetite, many people will use additional servings and everyone will use foods not specified, such as butter, other fats, oils and sugars to accompany the other foods.

**Milk Group**--

Some milk daily:

- Children—3 to 4 cups
- Teen-agers—4 or more cups
- Adults—2 or more cups
- Pregnant women—4 or more cups
- Nursing mothers—6 or more cups

Cheese and ice cream can replace part of the milk.
Meat Group--
Two or more servings:

Beef, veal, pork, lamb, poultry, fish, eggs, with dry beans, peas and nuts as alternates.

Vegetable-Fruit Group--
Four or more servings, including:

A dark-green or deep yellow vegetable, important for vitamin A—at least every other day.

A citrus fruit or other fruit or vegetable, important for vitamin C—daily.

Other fruits and vegetables including potatoes.

Bread-Cereals Group--
Four or more servings:

Breads or cereals—whole grain, enriched, restored.

One slice of bread is a serving.

More Information

Distrust any suggestion of self-medication with vitamins, minerals or specific foods to cure diseases. Get facts about food needs from nutrition authorities.

For more information contact:

• County Extension Offices
• State College and University Home Economics Departments
• State Department of Public Health
• State Dairy Council
• Food and Drug Administration
• American Medical Association
BOOKS


PAMPHLETS

Available from the Extension Service. County offices are usually in the Court House.


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