

Nutrition Fact or Fiction



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There's no shortage of misinformation when it comes to info about what to eat, from the latest diet for shedding fat to the greatest supplement for enhancing recovery. As a savvy consumer, you have to search beyond the hype to distinguish what's really healthy and what's just a fad. Here are five considerations to keep in mind when you're pondering whether or not something is actually touting proper nutrition.

Consider the Source

Have you ever wondered what the word "nutritionist" really means? In many circumstances, it actually means nothing. The term "nutritionist" is not a legally recognized credential and, as a title, it is often misapplied (and usually by individuals who have had no formal training in nutrition science). In fact, numerous online diploma mills churn out "nutritionist" credentials that mean little to nothing in terms of qualifying an individual to provide sound nutritional guidance.

Consider the source when reading or learning about nutrition. Look for individuals who have a registered dietitian (RD) or registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) credential, which indicates that he or she is a food and nutrition expert who has met academic standards, completed requisite supervised practice, passed a national examination and performs approved continuing professional educational requirements to maintain registration.

Other experts in nutrition include those with a master's or doctorate degree in a nutrition-related field. Some medical doctors (MD) and osteopathic doctors (DO) have also completed additional nutrition training or specializations in nutrition. There are many other nutrition credentials out there—some more respected than others—but it is wise to research exactly what went into obtaining the credential before taking advice from the credential holder.

Too Good to Be True?

You've seen the headlines that make incredible promises that most certainly can't be true. Think about it:

- Can you really lose 15 pounds of fat in one week?
- Will you get slim and trim without ever having to exercise?
- Is it possible that one food group is so evil that it should never be consumed?

If something sounds too good or too extreme to be true—it probably is. Magical-sounding and superbly easy answers to complex problems are rampant in the nutrition, weight loss and supplement worlds. If a tagline sounds like something that most people want to hear, there's a very good chance it just isn't true.

How Tight Are Those Testimonials?

As consumers, many of us have become accepting of testimonials, especially when we see products endorsed by celebrities. But there is a fine line between truth and fiction when it comes to testimonials in the food and nutrition world.

Is that gorgeous actress so gorgeous because of the brand of water she drinks? Is that talented musician so talented because of the pre-workout supplement he takes?

Prolific use of testimonials is one trick that marketers use to hide the fact that there may not be any scientific proof backing up their claims. Look at the research behind testimonials and see if the claims of “feeling younger,” “having more energy,” or “quickly losing weight” are marketing jargon or really proven in peer-reviewed literature.

Fake News in Food

Fake news isn't limited to politics or tabloids. Many marketers of food and nutrition products have no qualms about setting up fake news sites or stories that look reliable

and familiar, but then “investigate” or “reveal” a certain product or supplement they want to sell you. If a nutrition news story looks suspicious, click around. It’s likely NOT part of that reputable publication you’re reading it in, but rather a paid advertisement.

Stay on Top of Fraudulent Products

When it comes to fraudulent products, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has discovered hundreds of dietary supplements that contain prescription drugs or chemicals that aren’t supposed to be in over-the-counter products. Check out the FDA’s [Recalls of Foods and Dietary Supplements](#) to stay current on what supplement scams are hot right now.

Where to Turn?

It’s not all bad news on the online food and nutrition front. There’s plenty of really good, reliable nutrition information out there. You just have to sort through a lot of junk to get at it.

One surprisingly easy place to start finding qualified nutrition information is by looking at U.S. government nutrition websites. The data on these pages are written by trained healthcare professionals, cited with appropriate references, and reviewed and updated regularly.

If you want to get started searching for reliable food and nutrition info, here are a few good government sites worth checking out:

- [Nutrition.gov](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture
- [Medline Plus](#) from the U.S. National Library of Medicine
- [USDA Nutrient Database](#)
- [Office of Dietary Supplements](#) (ODS)

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