

22 COMMON NUTRITION MISTAKES

HOW TO AVOID THEM FOR BETTER HEALTH

- 1. You pick brown eggs over ‘less-nutritious’ white. Result: up to a 25% premium paid for an aesthetic choice.** Even in the era of omega-3 eggs, brown eggs retain a certain rustic allure. But a large brown egg contains the exact same proportion of white and yolk, and the same nutrients, as a white egg. Brown eggs simply come from a different breed of hens.
- 2. You drink soy milk for the calcium, but you don’t shake it. Result: When sludge forms at the bottom of the carton, you toss it—and a whole lot of good-for-you calcium goes down the drain.** Calcium added to soy milk is good for bones, hearts and blood pressure. But it tends to settle, and then can be quite tough to redistribute into the milk. Fortified soy milks may deliver only 25-79% of the promised calcium, depending on the type of calcium that is used and the way it’s added. In cow’s milk, by contrast, the calcium is naturally suspended throughout the liquid. Shake, shake, shake that soy milk each time. And consume calcium from a variety of sources to get the full amount you need daily: 1,000-1,200 mg depending on your age.
- 3. You favor peanut butter fortified with omega-3’s to get your share of those good fats. Result: Good idea, but you’re probably not getting as much omega-3’s as you think.** Fortification of foods is sometime good but also marketed somewhat enthusiastically. You’d have to eat one cup of peanut butter to equal the amount of omega-3’s in a single serving of salmon or 1,520 calories versus about 200 in a 4 oz. serving of salmon.
- 4. You trade ground turkey for ground beef in recipes to save fat. Result: Unless you’re careful, not much savings over lean beef.** Turkey breast is lean, but dark meat isn’t, and some ground turkey contains both. A quarter pound of ground turkey contains 3 g sat fat. Compare that to 2.5 g in the same amount of sirloin. Ground turkey breast has just half a gram of sat fat, so the right cut of turkey is a significant fat-cutter.
- 5. Watching your weight, you pull way back on snacking. Result: Less weight-loss success, more hunger, fatigue.** It’s a long stretch between a noon-time lunch and a 7 PM dinner. Snacking helps manage hunger by keeping you metabolic engine running at a more constant pace, which means you won’t attack dinner like a ravenous wolf. Any healthy eating plan should allow for at least one or two snacks per day: something nutritious and satisfying.
- 6. You’re on a veggie kick, boiling lots every night. Result: Vitamin-rich pot water.** Dropping foods that are rich in water-soluble vitamins (like B’s, C, and folate) into cooking water leaches some of the vitamins. Boiled broccoli retains only 45-64% of its vitamin C after 5 minutes of boiling; steamed broccoli kept 83-100%. Haul out that steamer, or use your microwave.
- 7. You hanker for some fast food. Grilled chicken beats beef burger. Result: Lots more sodium and not much in the way of calorie savings.** Sodium can soar in a chicken sandwich for two reasons. The chicken breast may have been injected with a salty brine solution to help the meat stay moist. At Burger King, the Tendergrill Chicken sandwich has 1,100 mg of sodium and 75% of that comes from the chicken itself. A Whopper, Jr. has half the sodium, little of it from the beef, and 130 fewer calories. Second, lean chicken sometimes picks up salty passengers along the way, like bacon or Swiss cheese. You have a 2,300 mg per day sodium allowance. Take a minute to scan the restaurant’s nutrition data—online, in-store, or from a smart phone.

8. **You're leaving your hot cereal eating 'til the weekend, when you can slow-cook some steel-cut oats. Result: you by-pass one of the easiest ways to get whole-grain, fiber-rich goodness.** Turns out an oat is an oat is an oat, whether it's steel-cut from the original groat or rolled flat and even pre-steamed so that it will cook in 90 seconds rather than 15 minutes or more. Flattening and steaming does not remove whole-grain benefits, so you get all of the vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and oat fiber. Yes, the steel-cut is nutty, chewy and delicious, but instant is weekday convenient. One caveat: pre-packaged flavored oats can contain a lot of added sugar and salt.
9. **In your daily calorie equations, you consider fruits like bananas and apples 'free' and don't think much about them. Result: You're eating better, but taking in more calories than you think.** Fruit is nutritious and an important component of a healthy diet, but contrary to Weight Watchers new Points Program, it's not a 'free food'. Swapping fruit for calorie-dense, nutrient-empty snacks is a good idea, but simply adding fruit will add calories in the long run. Focus more on healthful food choices, but be mindful that no food is 'free'.
10. **You automatically swap turkey bacon for the pork kind. Result: Not always the hefty salt and fat savings you might expect.** Bacon is a prime example of why label-reading is important. If you like pork, choose a lean, high-flavor cut. If you need less fat, find a lean, lower-sodium turkey product.
11. **You spoon on whole flax seeds to get heart-healthy omega-3 fats. Result: the omega-3's are tourists; they don't hang around.** Flaxseeds are trendy, marketed as something of a super-food. They represent an excellent way to add fiber and omega-3 fatty acids to baked goods, oatmeal and cereal. And they're a good alternative to fish and fish oil for vegetarians and vegans. But whole seeds pass right through the digestive tract unabsorbed. Grind the seeds to unlock the goodness, and keep ground seeds in the refrigerator.
12. **Mindful that many women under 50 are iron-deficient, you're beefing up on iron-rich spinach. Result: You may get lots of nutrients, but not much iron.** Iron is important for energy because it helps deliver oxygen to every cell in your body, but it's tricky to get because it comes in 2 types. Spinach and other plant sources are rich in what is called non-heme iron. Only about 2-20% of non-heme iron is absorbed, versus 15-35% of the heme iron found only in animal foods, specifically meat. Chicken liver has the most (13 mg), followed by oysters (4.5 mg), and beef (about 3 mg). What to do: Vitamin C helps increase your body's uptake of non-heme iron foods. Pair iron-fortified breakfast cereal with a glass of OJ, or add grapefruit segments to that spinach salad.
13. **You make time for the gym, but you skip the pre-gym snack to save on calories. Result: Fewer calories can mean fewer calories burned—not the best equation.** Think of a pre-workout snack as fueling, not filling. Although you exercise to burn calories, to exercise effectively and burn even more, you need a few calories in the tank. Aim for 100-200 calories, just to give you enough energy for exercise. Too much food, and your stomach will be working out at the same time to digest it all. Thirty minutes before exercise is the way to pace this. If you're an early bird, a pre-workout snack is essential—there's no fuel in the tank. If you exercise in mid-afternoon, you might need less. What to eat: The best pre-workout snack provides a mix of carbohydrate and protein: a banana and a handful of nuts or a slice of whole grain bread with peanut butter.
14. **While cooking, you eyeball the oil, the salt, the sugar....Result: More calories or sodium than you might think.** Cookbooks call for swirls, coatings, even 'glugs' of olive oil. Others, more precise, call for a teaspoon or tablespoon—but it saves time to just guess. Experiments with guesswork show that most people over-pour common foods and liquids. The difference between a teaspoon and tablespoon of any oil is 80 calories

and 9 grams of fat. The difference between a half-teaspoon and teaspoon of salt is about 1,200 milligrams—half the daily recommendation. What to do? Measure!

- 15. You also do a free-hand pour at the breakfast table. Result: You likely eat enough for 1.4 people.** When 100 people were asked to show their typical cereal serving only 1 in 10 poured close to the recommended amount. For flake cereals, the average pour was 40% more than the 1-cup serving size. A full cup of skim milk in the bowl means you've added 40 more calories over the label standard. O.J., coffee cream, jam for toast: Breakfast requires lots of little portion calls, all made on a groggy brain. What to do: Read labels, and then practice with a measuring cup, just to get an idea of the recommended serving. If you change cereals, start over.
- 16. You're careful when you buy your snacks, less so when you serve them. Result: Healthy choice made, unhealthy quantity consumed.** Here's the scenario: 94% fat-free microwave kettle corn, to take just one example, saves you 6g of fat over the full-fat variety. But a typical, not-very-big-bag contains 2 servings of about 3 cups each. This bag often joins the eater on the couch for a movie, and soon it's empty. It's just human nature to eat what a container contains. And containers also beg to be filled before they're emptied. People eat as much as 31% more when they used a large bowl to hold their food, and those who watch TV while they snack tend to eat 28% more. What to do: Choose that healthier snack—and eat it in measured amounts.
- 17. You set the treadmill for a 300-calorie workout so you can eat a 300-calorie treat. Result: More calories in than out.** Cardio-equipment calorie counters are notorious for overestimating your calorie burn. Some machines can be off by 25%. Machines that require you to enter your weight, height, gender and age give you a better estimate, but it's still an estimate. What to do: If you're calorie-counting, invest in a heart-rate monitor, the kind that straps around your chest.
- 18. You sprinkle wheat germ on yogurt or muffins for crunchy, whole grain goodness. Result: A good nutrient boost, but not quite a whole-grain boost.** A whole grain is a seed with three parts: bran, endosperm, and germ. Wheat germ is only one component of a whole grain. Most of the fiber is in the bran, and the protein is in the endosperm. Wheat germ delivers a concentrated wallop of folate and vitamin E but doesn't count as a whole grain. What to do: Enjoy your germ, but not at the expense of other whole-grain choices.
- 19. You stock up on fresh vegetables on Sunday for your week of healthy eating. Result: Come Thursday or Friday, nutrients have done a vanishing act.** Some nutrients begin deteriorating in a fresh fruit or vegetable as soon as it's harvested. In a week, green beans lose 77% of their vitamin C, spinach loses 50% of its folate, and pre-chopped cantaloupe, mango and strawberry pieces lose 10-15% of their carotenoids, such as beta-carotene and vitamin A. What to do: It's less convenient, but bring home fresh produce a few times a week. Also, shop smart: ask the produce manager which vegetables are freshest. And choose locally grown (shorter transit time) or frozen vegetables off-season, which are flash-frozen within hours of harvesting, sometimes right in the field. Of course, if you happen to find yourself with a slightly tired-looking bunch of spinach, don't toss. Put it in a medium-hot skillet with a bit of olive oil and finish wilting it. (Just don't boil it; see mistake #6.) It's still a good nutrition deal.
- 20. You buy 80/20 ground beef because it's a good thing that only 20% of the calories come from fat. Result: Way more fat in your burger or meat loaf than you thought.** The 80/20 percentage refers to the proportion of fat and protein in the grind, not the proportion of calories. Because fat contains more than twice the calories of protein (9 calories per gram versus 4), 20% of the fat by weight contributes 72% of the *total calories* in a .5 ounce portion of raw ground beef, or about 180 of the 250 total calories.

What to do: Buy a much leaner grind, such as 90/10, or ask for a lean whole cut such as sirloin or brisket to be custom ground for you, which will also be fresher.

21. Big-crystal and flaky sea salts and kosher salts are bulkier, so you figure they also contain more sodium. Result: You miss out on an easy way to cut 20% of your added salt. Kosher and table salt are chemically the same. But the larger grain size of Kosher salt actually works to your advantage. Tiny grains of table salt tend to pack down in the spoon, leaving less air. Course flakes and crystals pile up like little, rough rocks, with more air between the pieces. That adds up to 20% sodium savings. What to do: Have fun exploring the new sea and rock salts now on the market. Stronger flavor means you can use less too.

22. Recipe calls for mincing the garlic. You stop at coarsely chopped. Result: Fewer heart-healthy compounds in your Caesar. Minced garlic is more redolent than chopped garlic because the smelly, heart-healthy thiosulfinates are created as the clove is cut. More cutting equals more healthy compounds. Thiosulfinates prevent blood platelets from clumping, which helps keep arteries unobstructed. Bonus tip: Chop garlic early in the prep phase, then set it aside for a few minutes (covered, so it won't dry out) to give time for thiosulfinates to develop. Grate garlic on a microplane and you'll release even more!

Source: Phillip Rhodes