



Nutrition Fact Sheet

Separating Facts From Fiction - Series Two

We are constantly bombarded with conflicting messages regarding food, nutrition and health in the media. But how do we separate what is fact from fiction?

In this fact sheet, we follow on from series one of 'Separating Facts and Fiction' and explore some more claims to determine if they are fact or have become fiction.

CLAIM: Raw Sugar Is Better Than White Sugar.

Whilst raw sugar is less processed than white sugar, the nutritional value is very similar. One level teaspoon of sugar contains approximately 16 calories, whether it is white or raw. In addition to this, both types of sugars contain very little traces of beneficial vitamins or minerals. Therefore, the guidelines remain the same for whether sugar is raw or white, in that sugar consumption including foods containing added sugar should be kept to a minimum.

CLAIM: Vitamin C Will Help Prevent A Cold.

Vitamin C is often regarded as a natural cold remedy, however so far the evidence supporting this is inconsistent. Some studies have found that whilst vitamin C does not appear to have any major influence in preventing a cold, it may have mild effects in reducing the duration of a cold. One study in particular found that consuming 200mg of vitamin C per day reduced the duration of a cold by approximately one day. Therefore, whilst it may not help in preventing colds, it may be beneficial in helping to reduce the duration of a cold.

CLAIM: Butter Is Healthier Than Margarine.

Margarine is often shunned for fear that it is ultra-processed and contains high levels of trans fats. Whilst this has previously been the case, these days almost all margarines are now trans fat free (less than one percent). Choosing margarine spreads which are based on plant oils such as olive oil or sunflower oil has also shown to have benefits in cardiovascular health by containing monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. In comparison, butter contains a larger amount of saturated fat which has shown to increase the risk of heart disease if consumed in large amounts. Therefore, if you are in good health a small amount of butter is fine, however choosing a plant based margarine or butter and margarine blend over butter may have a more beneficial effect in preventing heart disease.



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CLAIM: Soy Is Bad For You.

Soybeans are a complete protein and are generally a staple in vegetarian and vegan diets. Some studies have also found that soy can help to reduce the risk of heart disease. However despite these benefits, soy is often considered controversial due to reports that it may be linked to thyroid problems and some cancers. This is due to it containing phytoestrogens and goitrogens. Whilst these are present in soy, some studies have found that consuming moderate amounts of soy product does not appear to contribute to any negative health effects and therefore consuming soy in moderate amounts is considered safe.

CLAIM: Himalayan Salt Is Healthier Than Table Salt.

Himalayan salt contains more minerals than table salt such as potassium, magnesium and calcium, however these are only found in small amounts. When looking at sodium content, there is no drastic difference with table salt and Himalayan salt both containing very similar amounts. As such, Himalayan salt will generally have the same effect as table salt on cardiovascular health. The benefit of using table salt is that iodised varieties are available which can be beneficial in thyroid health. However, when using salt it is still recommended to monitor the amount used and ideally keep to a maximum of 2300mg of sodium (one teaspoon of salt) daily.

CLAIM: Skim Milk Contains More Sugar Than Regular Milk And Should Be Avoided.

Whilst skim milk does contain more sugar than full fat milk, this amount is not significant (less than one gram) and will only make a very small contribution to your daily sugar intake. When looking at the differences in calories and fat, one cup of skim milk contains almost half the amount of calories, and ~95% less saturated fat compared to full cream milk. Additionally, the fat found in milk is predominantly saturated fat and if consumed in excess can contribute to cardiovascular disease. Therefore the benefits of consuming less calories and saturated fat far outweighs the slight increase of sugar and therefore skim and low fat dairy can be included as part of a healthy diet.

For more information, please contact the dietitian team at dietitian@catercare.com.au