

## Fact or Myth: The Truth About Healthy Nutrition

With so many sources of nutrition information in the world today, it is sometimes hard to tell what is true and what is false. Be careful what information you read when browsing the web. You should always make sure the information is coming from a dependable professional organization. A registered dietitian can point you towards reliable nutrition resources. In this issue of NutriNews, we will be exploring some popular nutrition topics and identifying if they are fact or myth.

### #1: Fact or Myth?

**Skim milk has less calcium than whole milk.**

Myth! All cow milks have similar amounts of calcium, the only thing that changes is the fat content of the milk. The chart below illustrates the fat vs. calcium content that is in milk. Whole milk has the most fat and the same amount of calcium as skim milk. It is recommended to choose low-fat or non-fat dairy products for heart health.



Type of cow's milk	Grams of Fat per serving	Calcium % daily value
Whole	8g	30%
2%	5g	30%
1%	2g	30%
Skim	0g	30%

Nutrition information from USDA's SuperTracker

### #2: Fact or Myth?

**While we are on the topic of milk...almond milk is an equivalent substitute to cow's milk.**

Myth! Although almond milk is advertised to be less calories and more calcium than cow's milk, and it may be helpful for people with lactose-intolerance, one major aspect gets overlooked. A

cup of almond milk only has 1 gram (g) of protein and a cup of cow's milk has 8g of protein. Milk is often an important source of protein in the diet. It is completely okay to drink almond milk. Be aware it is low in protein so you can add additional protein foods to your meals, such as peanut butter, sunflower seeds, Greek yogurt or hummus! Soy milk is also an option for lactose-intolerance, with 6g of protein per serving.

### #3: Fact or Myth?

**Not everyone needs to avoid gluten.**

Fact! Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley and rye. Gluten seems to have a negative reputation. It is not unhealthy or "bad" for you. It is simply a protein that some people are unable to tolerate due to a disease called celiac. A gluten-free diet is not a weight loss diet for those who are looking for the next weight loss trend. It is a medically necessary diet for roughly 1% of the U.S. population that has been diagnosed with celiac disease.

### #4: Fact or Myth?

**Organic food is healthier**

Myth...but keep reading!

"Organic" is a term that refers to a method of farming of fruit, vegetables, meat, grains, and dairy. Organic methods of



farming reduce pollution. Also, natural fertilizers, crop rotations and mulch are used instead of pesticides and antibiotics to manage weeds, insects, and prevent diseases and molds. That being said, there are less pesticides in and around the food. Also, organic foods are not allowed to be genetically modified. The nutrient content between organic and non-organic foods is very similar. As far as nutrition goes, there is not enough research to say one method of farming produces more

nutritious food than the other. It is really a personal preference whether you want organic or non-organic foods.

Depending on what type of food you are buying, whether you peel it and how well you wash your foods before you eat and cook them may play into your decision of whether to purchase organic or not. Foods that may be peeled before eating such as onions, avocado, corn, pineapple, mangos, kiwi, eggplant, cantaloupe, watermelon, grapefruit, sweet potato, and honeydew melon may be purchased non-organic. This is because you would peel away the layer that has the pesticides or chemicals on it. Celery, strawberries, apples, peaches, blueberries, nectarines, bell peppers, cherries, and grapes may be purchased organic since you are eating them without peeling them. You would want fewer pesticides on these foods since you are not peeling the outer layer off.

### #5 Fact or Myth?

#### **Sports drinks are just for sports.**

Fact! Sports drinks were originally designed for athletes working out at high intensities for hours at a time. They are a drink to refuel the carbohydrates, electrolytes and water lost through energy use and sweating. These beverages contain higher amounts of sugar as well as sodium and potassium, which you do not really need unless you are losing them through vigorous activity. If you drink these beverages on a regular basis you may be getting too many calories which may contribute to weight gain. Also the sugar content in these drinks may contribute to tooth decay. These drinks are especially unnecessary for children to drink due to the high sugar/calorie content. Unfortunately, it is easy to “drink your calories” and not even realize you may be contributing to weight gain. If your goal is weight loss and you drink a sports drink after a workout, you are replacing many of the calories you just worked so hard to burn off. Use water to quench your thirst. Water should be the primary beverage throughout the day.



### #6 Fact or Myth?

#### **Butter is healthier than margarine.**

Myth! Butter is made from animal fat and contains saturated fats. Margarine contains more heart-healthy fats than butter. Not all margarines are good options. Avoid stick margarine because it may contain trans fats, which our bodies cannot digest. The more solid the margarine the more trans fat it may have. If the label says “partially hydrogenated oil” in the ingredients, set it back on the shelf because it contains trans fats. The softer the margarine is, the less likely it is to have trans fat. A general rule of thumb is the more liquid the fat, the less saturated and more heart healthy it is. Other sources of heart healthy fats are liquid oils such as canola oil, olive oil, peanut oil, avocado, nuts and nut butters, flaxseed, fatty fish, and eggs. Even if you are eating heart healthy fats, they should still be limited because fats give us the highest amount of calories.

### Summary

Whether it is on the television, a blog, social media site, magazine, or newspaper, everyone seems to be talking about nutrition. It is important to know what is true and what is not. A registered dietitian is the expert in nutrition. Be sure to look for the qualifications of the person who is writing or talking about nutrition.

The following are trustworthy sources to search for nutrition information:

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

[www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)

<https://medlineplus.gov/foodandnutrition.html>

<https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/>

<http://www.fda.gov/>

#### **Need a Dietitian?**

Registered Dietitians are here to help you with your nutrition questions. To make an appointment call 412.692.4497 (Oakland location) or 412.623.2421 (Shadyside location).