

Fact Sheet: Healthy Eating

Myth: If you are overweight, you need to lose weight in order to be healthy.

Fact: It is more important for your health to focus on exercising regularly, eating regularly, and eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables than to worry about losing weight. Overweight people actually get sick the least and have the lowest mortality rate of any weight category!

Myth: Exercising will cause me to lose weight.

Fact: Regular exercise is very beneficial for your mental health and physical health. However, the biggest factor that causes weight loss is cutting calories.

Myth: Dieting works!

Fact: Some diets work in the short term, because cutting significant amounts of calories usually leads to short term weight loss. However, only about 5% of people maintain weight loss over a long term period. Most people who diet gain weight back plus more, leading to weight cycling and more weight gain.

Myth: Skipping meals can help me lose weight.

Fact: Skipping meals often leads people to feel overly hungry or slows their metabolism, causing them to eat more in the long run.

Myth: Cutting out certain food groups will lead to improved health.

Fact: Eating anything is ok in moderation. It is not good for your health to eat fast food and sugary desserts every day. However, completely cutting them out often leads to “the abstinence violation effect,” in which a person feels shame and guilt for “messing up” and then overeats .

Myth: People who are underweight can eat a typical amount of calories to gain weight back.

Fact: When people drop to an underweight/starvation weight range, they need to eat almost double the amount of calories that a typical weight person does to gain weight. This is because as they start to eat, their body burns up food for fuel to rebuild muscle and protein, which causes metabolism to speed up. Therefore, they need to eat even more to actually re-gain weight.

Myth: Mostly White girls from middle and upper class homes get eating disorders.

Fact: Eating disorders occur at the same base rates in Black, Latina, and Asian-American girls as White girls, and across all SES categories.