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How to Find Trustworthy Nutrition and Weightloss Information

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Dietitians of Canada offers the following information to help you screen through the sea of misinformation:

Have you ever heard or read nutrition advice and thought, “Wow that almost sounds too good to be true?”

We are all hungry for information about nutrition and health, but not all advice we see online or in media is evidence-based. In fact, much of it isn't; many recommendations aren't based on the best available science or may only tell you part of the story.



To help you sort through the noise and find the best available nutrition information, here are **5 tips to help you spot misinformation:**

1. Is the person or product **promising a quick fix** like fast weight-loss or a miracle cure? If it sounds too good to be true, then it likely is! Making changes to your health means a commitment to eating well and exercising regularly.
2. Are they **trying to sell you products** such as special foods or supplements instead of teaching you how to make better food choices at home, at play, at work or while eating out?
3. Do they **provide information based on personal stories** rather than on facts? Although it's nice to hear about a success story from a celebrity, it's not proof that something works or is true. Nutrition advice should be based on the best available scientific research. Dietitians are university trained, regulated health professionals who use tools such as **PEN®** to make sure they are basing their advice on the best available information.
4. Is their **claim based on a single study** or a few research studies? Were the studies with animals or humans? Are you similar to the humans that were studied (age, gender etc.)? The stronger the study design, and the more studies available that draw the same conclusions, the stronger the evidence that something is true.

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5. **What are the person's qualifications?** Think about it: You wouldn't ask a celebrity how to build a safe bridge, you'd ask a professional engineer. You also wouldn't ask a celebrity to fill your cavity, you'd ask a dentist. The same thinking should apply for nutrition advice. Dig a little deeper and ask for credentials. The title dietitian is protected by law, just like a nurse, dentist or pharmacist. Look for the initials "RD or PDT" to identify a registered dietitian.

What is evidence-based practice?

Dietitians are committed to evidence-based practice. This means that when they make a recommendation to you or your family they are basing it on the best available scientific evidence. Dietitians develop evidence-based resources that translate the science into practical information you can use to manage your health.

Why do health and nutrition recommendations change?

Recommendations change over time as we learn more about nutritional science and as we change as a society. It's important to remember though that one new study or theory is rarely enough to change our advice. The basic advice has remained unchanged: eat a variety of foods including vegetables, fruits, dairy, legumes, nuts and fish and exercise everyday.

Understand Research terms

Becoming familiar with research terms can help you understand information you read to help you make better decisions about the information.

- **Blind experiment**—in this type of experiment, the study subjects don't know which treatment they are getting. This avoids the "placebo effect" where subjects expect the treatment to work so it does.
- **Experimental group**—the group who gets the treatment being studied.
- **Control group**—the control group is treated the same way as the experimental group but they do not receive the treatment being tested. This is an important part of a study because it means any effect observed in the experiment group is a result of the treatment.
- **Placebo**—a placebo mimics the treatment and is used to test the psychological effect of being given the treatment. It could be a diet, a drink or even a sham treatment.

For more information on finding credible online information check out:

- National Library of Medicine: [Audio Tutorial - Evaluating Health Information on the Internet](#)
- Medline Plus: [Healthy Web Surfing](#)

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