

# Common nutrition myths debunked here *Eat soup, help hungry in Col. Co.*

Folklore and food lore often get mixed into a goulash of advice on nutrition. Well-meant advice covers when and what to eat, but it can be difficult to sort out the facts.

Just in time for March, which is National Nutrition Month, here are some food myths to chew on from TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), provided by Joan Pleuss, R.D., C.D.E., M.S., C.D., Senior Research Dietitian in the General Clinical Research Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

- Don't eat between meals.

False – Eating four to five meals and snacks helps healthy eaters control their appetites, according to numerous studies. The total calories must be stay within the range for the eating plan, however.

- Don't eat before bedtime.

False – Again, it's the total number of calories that matter, not when those calories are consumed.

- Breakfast should never be skipped.

True – Studies have shown that eating breakfast decreases the likelihood that you will overeat later in the day. Breakfast also increases overall energy and helps your brain concentrate, solve problems, and remember facts better.

- Protein should be a part of meals and snacks.

True – Lean meat, yogurt, cheese, nuts, and beans are all great proteins that will help keep healthy eaters feeling full longer.

- It's better to graze than eat

three square meals a day.

True – Six mini-meals eaten throughout the day can effectively keep you satisfied. The foods selected should be healthy and the total amount of calories should not exceed the amount needed to maintain or lose weight.

- There are some foods that should be eaten every day.

True – You should include food from all the TOPS Exchange groups every day. In the Milk Exchange group, yogurt plays a role in bone health and strengthens the immune system. In the Vegetables Exchange group, spinach, kale, bok choy, and romaine are great sources of nutrients helpful for bones, heart, and eyes. Tomatoes decrease the risk of certain cancers and heart disease. Carrots, sweet potatoes, winter squash, and yellow bell peppers are wonderful sources of carotenoids, which fight cancer. Fruits such as blueberries, strawberries, purple grapes, and raisins contain many antioxidants to help prevent memory changes as we age and also to help prevent cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Meat Exchanges such as dried peas and beans contain antioxidants that may improve brain and heart function. Grains, including oats, quinoa, and wild rice, lower the risk of heart disease. Heart-healthy fats can come from walnuts, almonds, peanuts, pistachios, and flaxseed.

- Skipping meals will help you lose weight.

False – Skipping meals actually may have the opposite effect. Studies have found that people who skip meals during the day tend to be heavier than people who eat the right foods four or five times a day. When you skip a meal, you may be slowing down your body's metabolism – thus, making your body require fewer calories and converting extra calories to fat.

TOPS Club, Inc. (Take Off Pounds Sensibly), the original, nonprofit weight-loss education and support organization, was founded more than 60 years ago to champion weight-loss support and success. Visitors are welcome to attend their first TOPS meeting free of charge. To find a local chapter, view [www.tops.org](http://www.tops.org) or call 800-932-8677 for more information.

## Make your doctor visits less stressful

by the American Counseling Association

Today's ever-busier health care systems can often seem rushed and impersonal. Doctors may care as much about their patients as ever, but they may not have much time to spend counseling and reassuring each patient.

The result is that a visit to the doctor can be a stressful and frustrating experience. We're worried about our illness or symptoms, intimidated by that white coat, confused by the medical jargon and perhaps feeling slightly rushed.

The answer is to take steps that can help minimize the stress of a doctor visit while also helping insure that you're getting the most from that visit.

A starting point is to be what

For the third consecutive year the Columbia County Commission on Children and Families (CCCCF) is organizing a fund-raising event to benefit the Columbia Pacific Food Bank, which provides food for low-income people.

Fight hunger, promote the arts and get involved in your community. Join members of the CCCCCF on Friday, March 13, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. for a simple meal of soup and bread and keep the handcrafted bowl as a reminder of hunger in the world.

The third annual Empty Bowls event will be held at the St. Helens Senior Center, 375 S. 15th Street. Tickets are available for \$10 at Houlton Bakery, the St. Helens Book Shop and at the office of the

Commission on Children and Families in the county courthouse. All proceeds will go to the Columbia Pacific Food Bank and all donations are welcome.

This is truly a community effort. Soup and bread are being donated by a number of local restaurants: the Klondike, the Docksider, Mark's on the Channel, Wild Currant Catering and Houlton Bakery. Coffee will be provided by our local Starbucks, and a group of 4-H youth will be baking and selling cookies as a community project, providing a sweet finish to the evening and a boost to fundraising.

Pottery students at both St. Helens High School and Scappoose High School have con-

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counseling professionals call "appropriately assertive." That simply means speaking clearly and directly while also being aware of both your and the other person's needs. You want to establish a climate of mutual respect that acknowledges the doctor's busy schedule as well as your needs to have your questions answered.

Start by writing a list of your health questions, leaving space for the answers. Tell your doctor you have questions and ask if he'd like to answer them before or after the exam.

If you find your doctor is using medical jargon or technical terms, politely ask him or her to restate what's being said in simpler terms. Doctors don't mean to confuse, but sometimes what are common terms to them are confusing to their patients. Don't just passively listen, pretending to understand.

If a doctor visit makes you too nervous to really hear what's being said, consider

bringing a friend or family member along as a second set of ears. Or, with the doctor's permission, recording answers with a small tape recorder or MP3 player will allow you to be sure not to miss anything.

Your goal is to get the information you need. Assertive communication means being politely proactive. Ask follow-up questions if something is unclear. If the doctor advises waiting to see what develops, ask for specifics on time and what type of developments to look for. At the end, summarize what you've heard about your diagnosis and possible treatments. Give the doctor a chance to correct anything you may have misinterpreted.

Open communications between doctor and patient make it easier for patients to voice their fears, anxieties and needs. When doctors and patients work as partners, communicating effectively with each other, the result is the best care for the patient.

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