The 8 Top Dietary Mistakes "Healthy Eaters" Make
by www.SixWise.com

Most Americans, 76 percent in fact, believe they have healthy eating habits, according to a 2004 poll by Ipsos-Insight. Yet 57 percent of the nearly 4,000 adults polled also considered themselves overweight. How can this be? Either the healthy eaters aren't being active enough, or we all have different definitions of "healthy eating."

"People say they have a healthy diet, but what does that mean to them?" said Ruth Kava of the American Council of Science and Health. "Does it mean they eat an apple a day and the rest of the day eat burgers and french fries?"

As the poll showed, many people -- most of them, at that -- believe they are healthy eaters. Meanwhile, a large portion of this same group is struggling with their weight and feeling tired and not in the best of moods -- hardly signs that they're truly eating healthy.

Everyone, even "healthy" eaters, make mistakes. Here are the biggest dietary mistakes that people make (and still think they're eating healthy).

Too much fruit juice can leave your diet sugar- and calorie-heavy.

1. Not eating breakfast (or other meals).
Breakfast is the most important meal of the day, as your body is literally breaking the "fast" you were in overnight. Your body needs nutrients in the morning to get going -- and not giving them to it will leave you famished (and prone to overeating or binging on junk food) come lunchtime.

The same goes for skipping other meals -- you're likely to be so hungry that you'll eat everything you can get your hands on when you come home from work.

2. Drinking lots of fruit juice.
Fruit juice does have some vitamins, however, it also has a lot of sugar and a lot of extra calories. Some of the lower quality brands also contain artificial colors and flavors and added sugar. The healthier choice? Skip the juice and grab a piece of fruit instead.

"What freaks me out is the amount of sugared soda and juice we drink," says Judith Stern, ScD, RD, professor of nutrition and internal medicine at the University of California, Davis. "I'd like to see all the sugared drinks sent out into space, where they could orbit the Earth forever."

3. Eating too many "healthy" snacks.
Snacking is fine -- healthy, even, if you're eating fruits, veggies and other nutrient-dense foods. But watch out for those not-so-healthy "health" foods like pretzels, fat-free chips and cookies, and giant bagels.

It's a lot easier than you think to add an extra 500 calories to your daily intake just by grabbing a handful of this and a handful of that throughout your day.

4. Drinking diet sodas all day.
Many people think that switching from regular to diet soda is a healthy choice. True, you are getting fewer calories and sugar, but diet soda is not good for you. Rather than putting a bunch of artificial sweeteners, flavors and colors (not to mention the caffeine) into your body, you're much better off with plain water or herbal tea.

5. Overloading the pasta.
Pasta got a bad rap during the "low-carb" craze, but there's still a large group of people who swear by it. Pasta, particularly the kind made from whole grains (not refined white flour), can be part of a healthy diet. The trick is to eat it in moderation, as the carbs can raise your blood sugar and lead to a surge of insulin in your body otherwise.

The problem is that people often eat up to four cups of pasta at one sitting, when an average serving size is just one cup.

6. Eating a lot of energy bars and drinking sport's drinks.
Energy bars, though marketed as health foods, are often little more than over-priced candy bars. Some do have added nutrients, but most also have some form of sugar and a lot of calories. Sport's drinks, similarly, are often loaded with sugar (and artificial flavors and colors) and -- unless you're literally running marathons -- you probably don't need those extra calories.

7. Cutting out all fat from your diet.
All fat is not your enemy. In fact, fat is vital for your body to function properly (or at all). The important thing is to know which fats are healthy and which are not. Fats to definitely avoid include trans fats (found in commercial baked goods, margarine, doughnuts, French fries and other snack foods). The experts are split when it comes to saturated fats, with some saying they should be avoided and others believing they are actually quite healthy.

Even "healthy" frozen dinners can leave you devoid of important nutrients like fiber and antioxidants.

Most everyone agrees that monounsaturated fats, the kind found in avocados, olive oil, and nuts, and omega-3 fats, the kind found in fish, are exceptionally healthy and should definitely be included in your diet.

"If you keep track of total calories, you don't have to worry about how much fat you eat, just what kind," said Alice Lichtenstein, DSc, an American Heart Association spokesperson.

8. Focusing your diet on frozen "healthy" dinners.
These meals may give you some vegetables and protein, and certain varieties will help you to stay trim by limiting your portion size (if that's all you eat), but they are not especially healthy. Many are lacking nutrients and contain preservatives and other unsavory ingredients.

Further, "Eating too many heavily processed foods can leave you short on fiber and antioxidants such as vitamin C," explains Jo Ann Hattner, RD, clinical dietitian at Stanford University Medical Center.

A healthier option would be to spend a day over the weekend cooking large batches of your favorite meals, then freezing them in convenient portion-sized containers. This way, you'll have a truly healthy meal that you can grab from the freezer and heat up after work.

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8 Secret Tactics that Trigger Your Body to Burn More Fat and Calories

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Sources

CBS News: Healthy Eaters Say They're Hefty

Prevention: Busted! 5 Major Eating Mistakes