

10 Weight-Loss Myths: Don't Be Fooled!
by Susan Woodward for MSN Health & Fitness
Freelance

When does a lie become an accepted truth? When the lie is repeated often enough.

It's the oldest trick in the book, a favorite ploy of politicians and others who stand to gain, but still we fall for it.

Especially when it comes to losing weight.

The diet industry is riddled with self-perpetuating myths, misconceptions, and downright mistruths, sighs psychologist Jeffrey Wilbert, Ph.D., author of *Fattitudes*.

“The strategy is to market fringe products and miracle cures that are very seductive in what they promise,” Wilbert explains, noting the billions of dollars the diet industry spends on consumer advertising. “Very few people are successful [at losing weight], but the promise gets into our subconscious and stays there.”

The antidote, says Wilbert, is for consumers to educate themselves from reputable sources with reliable data. We start the process by smashing 10 of the most common weight-loss lies right here.

1. “Lose 30 pounds in 30 days.” Or any other gimmick that pledges massive weight loss at breakneck speed. “It’s not healthy, and it’s not true,” Wilbert says. Permanent weight loss requires lifestyle change, not a quick fix, he adds.

2. Fat is bad for you. “Dieticians forwarded that one to people for years,” says registered dietician and nutrition teacher Rick Hall. Now they know better. The truth is that *some* fats are unhealthy, and some are good – indeed, necessary – for your health. (Hence the term, “*essential* fatty acids”!)

3. Carbohydrates are bad for you. First it was fat, now carbohydrates are the bad guy. Wilbert explains that this trendy idea is just too broad. When trying to lose weight, make a distinction between unhealthy carbohydrates, such as white sugar, and complex carbohydrates, such as vegetables and whole grains, which provide vital vitamins, and fiber to aid digestion.

4. Lose weight by not eating. Uh...no. Starving deprives the body of the nutrients it needs for life and can lead to serious illness. Plus you lose muscle mass, not fat. Even if you do lose pounds, you gain them back almost immediately when you raid the fridge again.

5. Don't eat after 6 p.m. “It’s not what time you eat, it’s *what* you eat!” insists *Dare to Lose* author, Shari Lieberman, Ph.D. “In Europe they eat at 10 o'clock at night and they're half the size of Americans.”

6. Salad bars are healthy. Bacon, cheeses, fried chicken, oily dressings...The apparent allure of salad bars means they probably require as much of your considered attention as ordering at a fast food restaurant. “You have to choose the foods at a salad bar wisely,” Lieberman reminds people.

7. Diet sodas aid weight loss. This is one of Lieberman’s favorite pieces of diet-industry hype. “There isn’t a single study that shows diet sodas help you lose weight. There’s absolutely no data on that at all,” she claims.

8. You shouldn’t step on a scale. “It’s another misconception that dieticians have passed on,” says Hall. “I completely disagree with it.” He says checking your weight on a regular basis, say once or twice a week, is an obvious way to gauge your progress and alter your diet accordingly. However, Lieberman notes that scales in and of themselves, well, suck. She encourages people to keep track of hip, thigh and tummy inches, too.

9. You can lose weight with a pill. “You can’t replace healthy eating and exercise with a pill,” Hall warns. “Pills aren’t a new thing, they’ve been tried for decades...[with] horrible side effects.”

10. You have to join the gym. Actually, the most recent research indicates 30 to 60 minutes per day of moderate physical activity is all it takes to balance healthy food intake. It doesn’t have to be strenuous exercise, “just *move* your body!” exclaims Hall.