

# 10 Big Fat Diet Lies

*WHEN it comes to weight loss, everyone seems to have some advice. But how do you separate fact from fiction?*

*Wherever we turn we seem to be bombarded with the latest quick-fix methods for weight loss. There are no-carb diets, low-fat regimes and the lemon detox. Then there are the rules: banning white foods, abstaining from coffee or eating only apples.*

*The list of dos and don'ts seems neverending. So how do we separate fact from fiction? We've turned to the experts to give you the skinny on those big fat diet lies.*

## Salads are the best food option

Just because there's some lettuce in a caesar salad, it doesn't mean it's healthy. While salads are a great lunch choice, they can also be packed with a lot of fat, particularly if you add nuts, cheese, dressing and avocado.

Consultant dietitian Susie Burrell says a large takeaway serving of chicken caesar salad has 22 grams of fat, compared to a Greek salad with chicken, which has 15 grams of fat.

*TIP Make your own salad with fat-free dressing.*

## Nuts are fattening

A handful of almonds a day can help you lose weight, increase your metabolic rate and even lower cholesterol, a study found. Dr Naras Lapsys, of The Body Doctor, says raw nuts contain heart-healthy monounsaturated fats.

"They are a protein-rich snack, which makes you feel fuller faster, and for longer."

*TIP Include about one third of a cup of raw nuts (almonds, cashews and walnuts) in your daily diet. It equals about 1100 kilojoules.*

## Low fat is best

Beware of foods that are "low fat" or "fat free", says celebrity weight-loss expert Dr Brian Sproule. While they might be low in fat, many of them are laden with sugar, so they often have just as many kilojoules as the full-fat version.

**Consultant dietitian Susie Burrell says a large takeaway serving of chicken caesar salad has 22 grams of fat, compared to a Greek salad with chicken, which has 15 grams of fat.**

Yoghurts can be a trap for the unwary. Some brands are low in fat but high in sugar. Also remember that "baked not fried" does not necessarily mean low fat, and 99 per cent fat-free sweets are still packed with kilojoules.

*TIP Read labels carefully. Check not only the fat content but also the total kilojoules per serving, as well as sugar and salt levels.*

## Green tea is bad for you

A study published in the American Journal Of Clinical Nutrition concluded that daily consumption of green tea reduced body fat and helped to lower cholesterol. Burrell has found it reduces sugar cravings and helps regulate appetite.

"We know it increases the metabolic rate but it also seems to neutralise the tastebuds and get rid of those sweet cravings," she says.

*TIP When hunger pangs kick in, sip on a cup of green tea.*

## Carbs are good any time of day

Banning bread and pasta from your diet altogether is not recommended, but limiting your carbohydrate intake in the evening will help with weight loss.

"I recommend people limit their carbs in the evening," dietitian Matt O'Neill says. "It's one way of keeping kilojoules in control and an effective strategy to lose weight."

*TIP The best time of day for carbohydrate intake is breakfast because it gives you energy to get through the day. Eat wholegrain breads and cereal and avoid processed carbohydrates such as white bread and biscuits.*

## Certain foods, such as celery, can burn fat

Contrary to many celebrity diets, no food can magically melt away fat. Foods such as celery and grapefruit are low in kilojoules, but not completely devoid of them.

*TIP Include celery as a low-calorie addition to salads and stir-fries, but don't depend on it to slim down. Exercise and eating healthy food is the key to losing weight.*

## To jumpstart your diet, you should drastically restrict kilojoules

Extreme diets will help you lose weight quickly, but that is because they

mostly consist of water, says Burrell.

She warns against a drastic restriction of food because your body will go into starvation mode, slowing the metabolism and preventing weight loss. "It also causes you to lose muscle."

*TIP For women trying to lose weight, aim for about 5000 kilojoules a day. If you hit a plateau in your weight loss, eliminate an extra 800 kilojoules a day.*

## Lifting weights makes you bulk up, rather than lose weight

This is a big misconception, especially among women, O'Neill says, adding that weight training will not only make you leaner and more toned, but that the more muscle mass you have, the more kilojoules you burn, even when you are resting.

"It can mean the difference between fitting into that favourite dress or not."

*TIP In addition to your cardio workout, aim for two to three weight-training sessions a week to increase the amount of muscle.*

## Coffee is bad for you

If you are reading this while sipping your latte, continue to enjoy it. The much-maligned but undoubtedly beloved beverage is actually good for you.

Innumerable studies have found that coffee is rich in antioxidants, may ward off depression, can improve your workout and recovery, and even protect against Parkinson's disease, gallstones, diabetes and some cancers.

*TIP Remember that caffeine is addictive so you should consume it in moderation: limit yourself to one or two cups daily.*

## Eating bananas will lead to weight gain

You would have to eat six bananas to equal the kilojoules in a slice of pizza. A medium banana is a good source of fibre, magnesium and potassium. It is also fat free and a great source of vitamin B6, which boosts the immune system and helps in the formation of red blood cells.

*TIP Have a banana on cereal or as a mid-morning snack. Avoid banana "chips", as they contain added fat and sugar and are loaded with kilojoules.*

