



Diet & Fitness

Healthy eating mistakes that are interfering with your weight loss goals

From misunderstanding what organic means to portion distortion, here are five common healthy food mishaps you may be making.

by Samantha Cassetty, RD / Jul.05.2018 / 12:54 PM ET



In one study, participants who tried foods with organic labels assumed they had fewer calories and tasted healthier than the exact same product with the regular label. Dan Dalton / Getty Images - Caiaimage

You've got some serious health goals. You're eating well and yet, something is amiss. I often hear from clients and friends who are trying to de-bloat or drop a few pounds, or perhaps cut back on added sugar or just fuel their busy life in a better way, but despite eating healthfully,

are having trouble meeting their targets. If this sounds familiar, read on for some of the top healthy food mishaps you might be making. Once you spot them and learn how to course correct, you can get back on track.

LABEL CONFUSION

It has been demonstrated time and again that food labels can impact your perception. In one [study](#), participants tasted identical versions of potato chips, cookies and yogurt, the only difference being that one version was labeled 'organic' and the other was labeled 'regular'. The foods with organic labels were deemed to have fewer calories and taste healthier than the exact same product with the regular label. In another [study](#) — this time using chocolate—the label 'fair trade' (which indicates ethical treatment of workers) was taken to mean that the treat was lower in calories. In many cases, people are prompted to eat more when they think they're eating healthier or lighter food. I know I would!

Related

Rather than relying on marketing lingo — whether you're browsing a supermarket aisle or an [Instagram food blogger](#) (gluten-free lava cake, #cleaneating, you can't fool me!) — take note of the ingredients. Limit foods made with refined grains (whether they contain gluten or not) as well as added [sugar](#). And when it comes to sugar, get clear on the fact that your body processes all forms in a similar manner — whether you consume regular 'ol table sugar, maple syrup, honey, agave or any number of added sweeteners.

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You'd Be Surprised to Find Hidden Sugars in These Foods

GREEN JUICES

Just because models and celebrities drink green juice doesn't mean they're right for you. If your goal is to get more veggies and you have trouble meeting your quota, green juice can help you fill the gaps. But if you're sufficiently meeting your produce needs or you're trying to lose weight, green juice can be tripping you up. In many cases, these sips have more fruit than veggies, which means more sugar, calories and carbs, and truthfully, none of us need any of those nutrients in excess. And I've seen people whose weight loss stalled because they added a green juice, or even worse, crept up. No matter what your health goals are, the best green juices are those made predominantly with vegetables. Even better are those that are blended rather than extracted. Blending retains the fiber — a beneficial nutrient that's removed from juice.

PORTION PROBLEMS

I was recently scanning food blogs when I was lured in by a beautiful avocado smoothie bowl recipe. Upon reading the instructions, which listed the recipe as one serving, I noticed it called for three bananas and one mango, among other things. Certainly fruit is healthy, but anything — even healthy food — can be eaten in excess. Any time you overeat, it can interfere with weight loss or worse, cause weight gain. And some foods, while perfectly tolerable in proper portions, can lead to extra gas and bloating if overconsumed. (Excess fructose from too much fruit can have this effect.) The extra carbs, calories and sugar from all this fruit can be problematic, even though it comes with a slew of vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Portion size is influenced by a number of factors. Eating a 'handful' of almonds might mean something different in my hand compared to yours. A drizzle of olive oil can vary, depending on who's pouring, and the avocado mash on your toast might be too little or too much, depending on your needs. If your clothes aren't fitting as well as you'd like, you're dealing with excess bloat, or your energy could use a lift, you may need to right-size your portion sizes. It's not necessary to start weighing and measuring all your food at each sitting, but it could be helpful to do that once or twice until your eyeballs adjust to the amount.

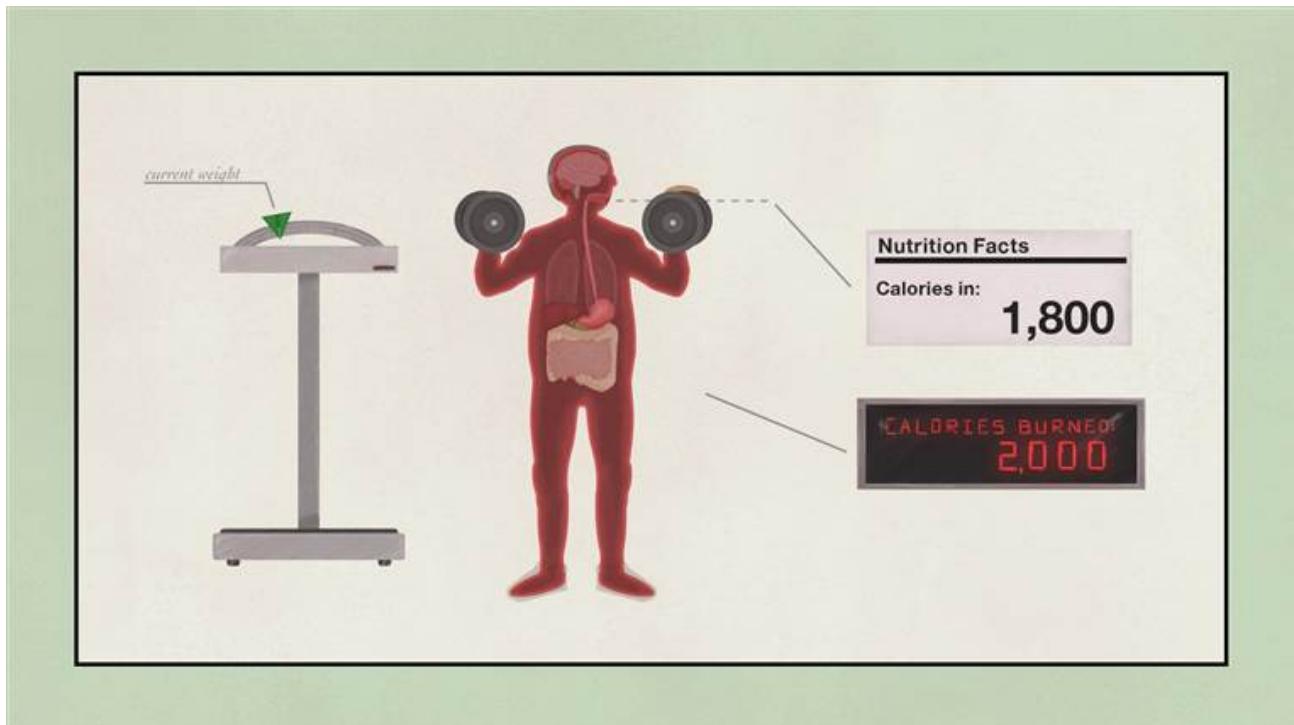
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OVER-SNACKING

According to one survey, 91% of Americans say they snack multiple times a day, and 21% of us are snacking more than we did five years ago. Certainly, between-meal snacking can provide a needed energy boost, slip more nutrients into your day and fend off hunger. Often, though, we snack for other reasons. Visual cues, like office donuts, emotional triggers, such as

a stressful meeting or argument with a spouse or even to pre-empt potential hunger are some of the many reasons I've seen. Unneeded snacks, even if healthful, can leave your body feeling less than awesome.

To reverse the over-snacking situation, start to become more aware of your snack triggers. Are the kids driving you crazy and you find yourself reaching for something to dial down your emotions? Did you just spot that your lunch meeting is a little later than your usual schedule and you want to make sure you can power through? Once you build awareness, ask yourself if you're truly hungry. Notice physical signs of hunger, like a bit of an empty feeling in your stomach, slight growling and so on. If they aren't there, consider holding off. If signs of hunger are present, have a small snack. If you routinely notice physical signs of hunger multiple times a day, your meals may not be satisfying you, and they could require a little attention.



LIGHT LUNCHES

Be it breakfast, lunch or dinner, I often hear from people who are over-relying on snacks to tame hunger after a light meal. I find this is especially true for people looking to lose a little weight. Eating less at meals, the thinking goes, will produce weight loss, however if you're physically hungry an hour or two after a meal, and reaching for snacks as a result, you could gain weight instead of losing it.

WHAT A NUTRITIONIST WANTS YOU TO KNOW

- Bad nutrition advice dietitians want you to forget
- The best way to lose weight boils down to these three things
- What you need to know about going vegan
- What is healthier: natural sugar, table sugar or artificial sweeteners?

- The healthier pick: a hot dog or a hamburger?

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