

Letter to the Editor: The Pundit Speaks

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“Common Health Habits That May Be Harmful”

There is a general consensus that drinking 8 glasses of water a day, taking a daily multivitamin or starving a fever are good health habits to follow. However, just because you have heard them innumerable times does not make them true. Many of these questionable fads lack scientific proof, such as the ones that follow. **Avoiding eggs to protect your heart.** Despite decades of controversy and debate, eggs have been shown to benefit heart health in recent years. But, like all foods, they should be eaten in moderation. In a recent study, participants who consumed 3-6 eggs per week reaped major health benefits, including lower risks of all-cause mortality and cardiovascular disease. While some investigators have asserted that eggs weaken heart health, the American Heart Association maintains that this stance lacks support from compelling evidence, and says that eating one whole egg per day aligns with a heart-healthy diet. **Drinking 8 glasses of water a day.** This notion lacks scientific verification. Drinking water doesn't have to be your only source of hydration. Consider that about 20% of the water your body needs can come from the foods you eat. Hydration requirements will vary based on your physical activity level, physical environment, and any underlying health conditions. If you rarely feel thirsty and your urine is colorless or light yellow, you are probably hydrating enough. **Taking extra vitamin C to cure a cold.** Loading up on citrus fruits and sources of vitamin C will not help you avoid or cure a cold, but research shows that the practice does not actually reduce the frequency of colds. Consuming too much vitamin C can actually lead to adverse side effects such as diarrhea, nausea, and heartburn. **Relying on a daily multivitamin.** Due to widespread advertising, studies have consistently shown that the majority of American adults consume multivitamins. But clinical evidence has not adequately supported the effectiveness of these products. In a meta-analysis published in *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, researchers found that multivitamins did not contribute to cardiovascular disease prevention. Always try to get your required vitamins and minerals from fresh fruits and vegetables, instead of from supplements. **Eating a low-fat diet for weight loss.** In a 2016 study published in *Nutrition & Diabetes*, researchers used the US Department of Agriculture National Nutrient Database to compare the sugar contents of different versions of the same foods: fat free, low fat, and regular. They found that low-fat and non-fat options typically contain higher amounts of sugar. Over-eating of these foods can lead to excessive weight gain, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

In the America that I love, we should never forget to consider the bogus sources of information that are available to all of us.

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