

Finding Reliable Healthy Eating Information on the Internet

Do you look for food and nutrition information on the internet? With an endless amount of nutrition advice and conflicting messages available, finding good quality information that you can trust is often a challenge.

While some food and nutrition recommendations are based on strong scientific research, many are not. Some advice can be incorrect, misleading, and may even be dangerous to your health. Here are a few tips to help you sort through the information.



Steps you can take

1. Look for 'red flags' to help you decide what is true and what is not. Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Is there a promise of a quick fix** like fast weight loss or a miracle cure? Is there a sensational headline for the next big thing? If a diet or product sounds too good to be true, then it likely is. Making changes in your habits means a long-term commitment to healthy eating and physical activity.
- **Is information based on personal stories or testimonials?** It may be nice to hear a success story from a celebrity or friend, but it's not proof that something works or is true. Nutrition advice should be based on the best available research.
- **Is the advice based on a single study?** The best answers to food and nutrition questions are found by combining the results of many studies. The more research that shows the same results the more trustworthy the advice is. Also, the more people in the study and the longer its duration, the stronger the results will be.
- **What are the writers' qualifications?** You wouldn't ask a celebrity how to design a bridge, you'd ask an engineer. The same thinking should apply to nutrition advice. Check the website section "about us" to find out more about the people or company responsible for the website.
- **Does the advice include buying special products or replacing foods with supplements?** Food is the best source of nutrients. Special products and supplements are usually not needed to improve your health.

- **Does the advice emphasize a single food or nutrient?** Current food and nutrition evidence shows greater health benefits from eating a variety of nutritious whole foods rather than focusing on single foods or nutrients.
- **Is the information on the website current?** Reliable websites will include the date of when a webpage was written and be regularly updated to reflect the most current nutrition information and advice available.

2. Seek out a food and nutrition professional who has experience in the area

- Registered Dietitians (RD or PDt) are provincially regulated professionals who have specific training and a university degree in foods and nutrition. Provincial colleges protect the public by ensuring dietitians practice safely, ethically and competently. To find a local dietitian visit:
 - The provincial college's online registry available from: <https://www.pdep.ca/accreditation/accreditation-about/Canadian-Dietetic-Regulators.aspx>. Search by 'Public' and find a dietitian.
 - 'Find a Dietitian' at https://members.dietitians.ca/DCMember/FindDietitianVF?language=en_US. Search by postal code, city and/or specialty. Many employee benefits programs cover dietitian services.
- Some provinces offer free access to registered dietitians by telephone. Visit 'Speak with a Dietitian' at <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Promotional-Material/Find-a-Dietitian.aspx> for more information.

3. Choose trustworthy websites

Look for websites from trusted sources such as educational institutions, government agencies and professional organizations. These websites will often end in .edu, .gov, or .org. Use the list of reliable websites below to get started. Websites ending in .com mean that they are commercial sites and may contain either accurate or inaccurate information. Look closely and assess for red flags to make sure that the information is not biased.

Don't rely only on the information you find on the internet when making a decision about your diet or health. Share the information you've found with your dietitian or health care provider. Talk about the changes you'd like to make and together you can come up with a plan that is best for you.

Here are a few websites with reliable information:

Healthy Eating:

- Dietitians of Canada
 - Unlockfood.ca www.unlockfood.ca/en/default.aspx
 - Cookspiration www.cookspiration.com
- Government of Canada – Food and Nutrition
<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/food-nutrition.html>

Specific Conditions:

- Allergy Canada https://dietitiansaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/2022-03/DA_NationalCompetencyStandards_WithGuide_2021%20%28PDF%2C%20376KB%29.pdf
- Arthritis Society <https://arthritis.ca>
- Canadian Cancer Society <https://www.cancer.ca>
- Canadian Society of Intestinal Research www.badgut.org
- Celiac Association of Canada <https://www.celiac.ca>
- Diabetes Canada <https://www.diabetes.ca/>
- Heart and Stroke Foundation <http://www.heartandstroke.ca/>
- Hypertension Canada <https://hypertension.ca/>
- Osteoporosis Canada <https://osteoporosis.ca>

Food Safety:

- Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education
<http://www.fightbac.org/>



Additional Resources

For information and advice based on your specific food and nutrition needs and preferences, call **8-1-1** and ask to speak to a HealthLink BC dietitian.

For additional information, see the following:

- HealthLink BC www.healthlinkbc.ca – Get medically approved non-emergency health information.

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.



Notes

Distributed by:

Dietitian Services at HealthLinkBC (formerly Dial-A-Dietitian), providing free nutrition information and resources for BC residents and health professionals. Go to www.healthlinkbc.ca or call **8-1-1** (anywhere in BC). Interpreters are available in over 130 languages.