

Avoid Nutrition Misinformation

March 2005 Nutrition Tip

By Cara Moncur, USU Dietetic Student and Pauline Williams, MPA, RD, USU Extension Agent

March is National Nutrition Month. You know nutrition is important for your health, but how do you know if the nutrition information you hear or read is correct?



A survey by the American Dietetic Association showed registered dietitians and doctors are people's most **valued source** of nutrition information. **But** doctors provide only 11% and dietitians just 1% of consumer's nutrition information. So where are consumers getting their nutrition information? From the media. Unfortunately, the media often takes early research and uses it for products and sales pitches. Often models, celebrities, athletes, and others without nutrition credentials are sources for nutrition related interviews.

If a nutrition report you hear or read contains any of the following, it likely contains misinformation:

- Promises a quick fix
- Recommends something based on a single study
- Contains urgent warnings of danger from one single product
- Makes claims that sound too good to be true
- Lists "good" and "bad" foods
- Promotes a diet that eliminates entire food groups

When you are reading nutrition recommendations, ask yourself these questions:

- Did a trustworthy institution such as a university conduct the research?
- Was the study conducted on humans or animals?
- Was the research conducted only on a small population?
- Who paid for the study? Could that affect their results?
- Is the institution conducting the research also selling the product or regimen they are reporting on?
- Does the study use absolutes like "proves" or "causes?" Remember, just because two things are associated one might not "cause" or "prove" the other.
- Does this study really apply to you (i.e. your gender, age, and health condition)?

Carefully considering the questions above can help you get a feel for the source and reliability of the nutrition information. If you have questions about a nutrition product or diet ask a qualified nutrition professional such as a dietitian.

Source: American Dietetic Association www.eatright.org