



# BALANCED CHOICES<sup>®</sup>

## monthly nutrigram

### Beware These Diet Tips

Just mention, in a public place, that you are trying to drop a few pounds, and all of a sudden everyone's an expert, eager to share their surefire diet tactics. Much of the time, these diet tips are more like "old wives' tales" with little scientific back-up. Here are a few of the most misleading diet tips that well-intentioned, self-described "diet gurus" may offer you.

- **"Don't Eat Bananas"**

Look for "banana avoidance" in another incarnation carrot avoidance! The diet guru may tell you that bananas (and carrots) are fattening because they are high in carbohydrates, cause too much insulin to be released and subsequently cause weight gain. Don't buy it. Bananas are high in potassium, fiber and they travel well – all this for only a little more than 100 calories. If you like bananas, they should be a part of your healthy eating plan.

- **"Don't Do Dairy"**

Some of the first words often heard from a dieter is "I'm on a diet, no more dairy". Well, not only are low fat dairy foods and beverages not bad for dieters, several studies have shown that they can actually help people lose weight. About three servings a day of milk, cheese and yogurt can help with weight loss – especially around the waist where obesity can be particularly unhealthy, increasing the risk for heart disease and high blood pressure. Choosing low-fat dairy foods such as skim milk, low fat cheese and yogurt are the best choices for dieters. Is it the calcium? Researchers really don't know. But they do know that calcium supplements did not have the same weight-loss benefits.

- **"Don't Eat After 8:00 p.m." (or 7 p.m.)**

This is one diet tip that never seems to go away. The logic (or illogic) goes like this: "everything you eat after 8:00 at night goes straight to fat while you sleep!" However, research has shown that what matters for losing weight is still simply the total calories for the day. The problem with nighttime eating is that the later hours are when most people tend to overeat – particularly if they've skipped meals during the day. Evening time is when most people are more relaxed, social and perhaps, watching TV – all things that make us eat too much.

- **"Eat Negative Calorie Foods"**

Some people claim that there are foods (such as celery) that actually take more calories to chew, digest and store than there are in the food. Thus, you burn more calories when you eat the food and end up losing weight! The problem is, there are no such things as negative calorie foods. While you do burn up some calories in order to process any food, it is roughly equal to only 10% of that food's calories. Thus, the calories used are always a smaller number than the calories in the food. What should you do when offered these and other well-intentioned yet ill-advised tips? Simply smile, eat a banana and find a registered dietitian (the real nutrition expert) in your area by going to **Dietitians of Canada at [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)**.