

Interpreting Food and Nutrition Headline News

Nearly every day, food and nutrition topics make the news. Today's report may contradict what you heard last week, leading you to ask "what does this mean for me?" Before you change your eating and lifestyle habits based on "breaking" nutrition reports, use the guidelines and tips that follow to evaluate a news story.



Quick & Easy Shrimp Primavera

The Science of Nutrition

Nutrition is an evolving science. Unraveling the mysteries of how nutrition affects the human body is a complex process. Every new research study builds on existing knowledge. Although new findings sometimes seem to contradict what is already known, these differences reflect how scientists learn. Scientific debate leads to further study, new results and more knowledge. Over time, as research is repeated with consistent results, recommendations based on sound science can be shared with the public.

Newsworthy Nutrition Reports

Be a healthy skeptic when it comes to evaluating nutrition in the news. Here are some tips for putting nutrition news stories into perspective.

- ◆ Go beyond the headlines or story "teasers." Attention-grabbing headlines or teasers often oversimplify very complex research findings. A different story often emerges when we go beyond the headlines. Bottom-line conclusions and advice usually are reported at the end of a brief news story.
- ◆ Take note of the study methods. The length of the study and the number of participants are two factors that may affect the importance of the findings. Many other factors can influence study findings, too. Consider who participated in the study. Research results may not apply to you if the people studied are different in age, gender, health or lifestyle. Animal studies usually reflect preliminary results and don't always apply to humans.
- ◆ Check the sources. Credible research is conducted by respected scientists at an accredited university or institution and published in a peer-reviewed journal or other publication. Research published in a peer-reviewed journal or magazine has undergone a rigorous review of the study methods and conclusions.

- ◆ Don't make changes in your diet or lifestyle based on the results of a single research study. Remember that "news" means recent and the media often are reporting on findings that are important, but preliminary, not widely recognized or still in question. Keep in mind that the results of one study are just a single piece of a bigger puzzle. Wait until more studies can confirm the results.

- ◆ Consider how the report fits with other information on the same subject. If research results contradict other studies, the researchers and reporters should offer an explanation. Most often, this means that more study is necessary.

- ◆ Look for expert interpretation. Reports of research findings often include reviews and comments on the study's scientific validity from nutrition and health professionals who are experts in the subject matter, but not involved with the research. These experts can offer insight on the relative risk or benefit of particular food practices, supplements or lifestyle habits. Look for reports that present expert opinions on both sides of the issue for a balanced viewpoint.

- ◆ Be wary of headlines or advice that claim "medical miracle" or "scientific breakthrough." These may be red flags. Claims that sound too good to be true are usually just that.
- ◆ Consider the food advice. Credible reporting will not suggest eliminating certain foods or food groups. Instead, results should be translated to practical guidelines for making healthy food choices.
- ◆ Seek a qualified second opinion. Consult with your doctor, dietitian or other healthcare professional for advice on whether research findings apply to you and, if so, what actions you should take.

Health-E-Advice

Nutrition and health information abounds on the Internet. You may be tempted to believe everything you read, but keep in mind that anyone with access and an interest can post information on the Internet. What electronic health information can you trust? Here are some tips to evaluate what you find.

❖ Note the website's source and funding. Be cautious when a site offers information from a single source, provides advice and then promotes a product or position, or pushes treatments or "miracle cures" that sound too good to be true.

❖ Look for the authors' affiliations and credentials. The site should include scientific sources for health information, along with proper attribution. Links that provide support or more detailed information should be included.

❖ Check how often the site is updated, when it was last

updated and who reviews the accuracy of the information.

❖ Use nutrition and health information from the Internet to complement, not replace open communication between you and your doctor, dietitian or other healthcare professional.

We can all learn important and useful information from reports about food and nutrition news. The key is to take the next steps: Think about the results and ask an expert if and how new findings apply to your individual needs before making changes in your healthy living plan.

These healthy living recipes turn current dietary advice about whole grains, vegetables and sensible portions into delicious meals that you'll enjoy preparing and eating. Give them a try!

Quick & Easy Shrimp Primavera

Prep: 10 min

Total: 30 min.

- 8 oz. whole wheat rotini pasta, uncooked
- 1/2 cup KRAFT LIGHT DONE RIGHT! Zesty Italian Reduced Fat Dressing
- 1 lb. medium shrimp, cleaned
- 1 large red pepper, chopped
- 1 cup packaged matchstick carrots
- 1 cup fresh sugar snap peas
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp. KRAFT 100% Grated Parmesan Cheese
- 1 tsp. grated lemon peel

COOK pasta as directed on package.

MEANWHILE, heat dressing in large nonstick skillet on medium heat. Add shrimp, vegetables and garlic; cook and stir 3 to 4 min. or until shrimp turn pink and vegetables are crisp-tender.

DRAIN pasta; toss with the shrimp mixture. Sprinkle with cheese and lemon peel.

Makes 4 servings, 2 cups each.

Substitute: Substitute 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into chunks, for the shrimp.

Nutrition Bonus: Try this quick-and-easy low-calorie low-fat dinner. The carrots provide an excellent source of vitamin A, and the peppers are a good source of vitamin C!

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 390 calories, 5g total fat, 1.5g saturated fat, 225mg cholesterol, 820mg sodium, 54g carbohydrate, 8g dietary fiber, 8g sugars, 36g protein, 110%DV vitamin A, 80%DV vitamin C, 15%DV calcium, 35%DV iron.

Exchange: 3 Starch, 2 Vegetable, 3 Meat (VL)

Pan Roasted Steak Dinner

Prep: 10 min

Total: 1 hour 5 min. (incl. marinating)

- 1 lb. well-trimmed boneless beef sirloin steak, 1 inch thick
- 1/2 cup KRAFT LIGHT DONE RIGHT! CATALINA Reduced Fat Dressing, divided
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cups small broccoli florets
- 1-1/2 cups very thinly sliced carrots (4 large carrots)
- 1-1/2 cups instant brown rice, uncooked

PLACE steak in resealable plastic bag. Pour 1/4 cup of the dressing over steak; seal bag and refrigerate at least 30 min. and up to 12 hours to marinate.

PREHEAT oven to 400°F. Spray large nonstick skillet with cooking spray; heat on medium-high heat until hot. Remove steak from bag; discard marinade in bag. Place steak in hot skillet; sprinkle with pepper. Place onions around steak. Cook 3 min. or until bottom of steak is well browned. Turn steak over; turn off heat. Combine broccoli, carrots and remaining 1/4 cup dressing; mix with onions. Wrap handle of skillet in heavy-duty foil. Place skillet in oven.

BAKE 18 to 20 min. or until steak is cooked to medium doneness (160°F). Meanwhile, prepare rice as directed on package. Cut steak across the grain into thin slices; transfer to serving plates. Spoon vegetable mixture over steak; serve with rice.

Makes 4 servings.

Nutrition Bonus: Enjoy this meal as part of your overall healthful eating plan. The carrots are an excellent source of vitamin A; the broccoli provides vitamin C.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 360 calories, 7g total fat, 2.5g saturated fat, 60mg cholesterol, 440mg sodium, 47g carbohydrate, 6g dietary fiber, 14g sugars, 26g protein, 210%DV vitamin A, 45%DV vitamin C, 8%DV calcium, 20%DV iron.

Exchange: 2-1/2 Starch, 2 Vegetable, 2 Meat (L)

Dietary Exchanges based on *Exchange Lists for Meal Planning* © 2003 by the American Diabetes Association and the American Dietetic Association