When it comes to weight loss, it’s often hard to determine fact from fiction.

Many people like to weigh in with their opinions and promote information on the internet that isn’t scientifically sound. To aid in your quest for truth, we’ve debunked some common weight loss myths.
Myths versus Reality

**MYTH:** Carbohydrates cause weight gain, especially grains, like pasta, bread and cereal.

**REALITY:** Weight gain is not limited to one food group, but a surplus of calories in all food consumption. Your body needs carbs to function properly, especially if you exercise. In fact, fruits and vegetables are carbohydrates. Moreover, grains, specifically whole grains, are part of a healthy diet as they provide you with important nutrients like fiber, iron and B vitamins.

**MYTH:** Exercising a specific part of your body can result in a reduction of fat in that area.

**REALITY:** Unfortunately, this is a common myth. The idea that fat can be burned from a certain area of the body by exercising that specific area is called spot reduction. Exercise helps with overall weight loss, but exercising a specific area won’t help the weight come off that area any quicker. Ultimately, your eating habits dictate whether or not you’re losing weight.

**MYTH:** Detoxes and cleanses can rid your body of toxins and help you lose weight.

**REALITY:** The key to weight loss is changing behavior to create a lifestyle change—not 30 days of carrot juice! Detox diets typically involve an extreme reduction in calories and/or cutting out a particular food group. You may lose weight in the short-term, but keep in mind any changes you make to lose the weight are the same changes you need to continue to keep the weight off. In fact, cleanses or detox programs are not effective, and in some situations can result in more harm than good. Eat food that is closest to its natural state if you want to limit the amount of unnatural substances you consume.

**MYTH:** Skipping meals or drastically cutting calories will help you lose weight.

**REALITY:** If you don’t meet your body’s energy needs, it will begin to store calories rather than burn them. Skipping meals or drastically cutting calories is neither effective nor healthy. In fact, your body needs a certain amount of calories to maintain essential functions. The average woman requires a minimum of 1200 calories, and the average man requires 1500. The more active you are, the more calories you’ll need to maintain your activity. Eating small meals regularly is more helpful to weight loss than skipping meals or not eating enough.

**MYTH:** There are foods that can help you burn more calories by increasing your metabolic rate.

**REALITY:** There are no foods that burn more calories than others or negative calorie foods. A calorie is a calorie and your body treats it the same way, no matter the source. Additionally, there isn’t magic bullet or quick solution to weight loss. Making healthy lifestyle changes and maintaining them over time is the solution!

**MYTH:** You have to eat healthy all of the time to lose weight.

**REALITY:** Eating healthy is important to lose weight, however it is also important not to deprive yourself. Allowing yourself to eat for pleasure some of the time may help you prevent binge eating and feelings of guilt that lead to more eating. With healthy eating it can be beneficial to adopt an 80/20 or 90/10 rule. Plan to eat healthy, 80 or 90 percent of the time, and allow yourself to eat unhealthy 20 or 10 percent of the time.