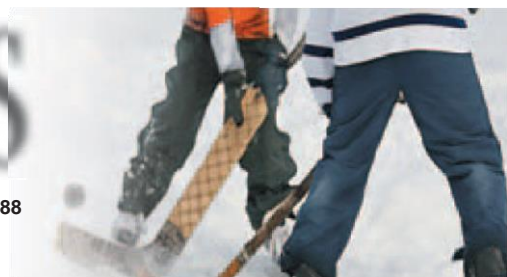


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March is nutrition month: How to get the facts



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Let's face it: not everything we read online is true. And while many of us know that, it's still easy to be taken in by popular ideas we see online or hear from friends. How can we really separate food fact from fiction?

Misinformation affects many of my young athletes and their families, but there is a way to spot your problem and seek reliable facts to solve it. I'm going to walk you through an example of a problem solving approach that was developed for Dietitians of Canada's Nutrition Month 2017 campaign this March.

Kate plays basketball. She was struggling to make sense of the nutrition advice she read online and wanted nutrition facts she could trust.

There is so much nutrition information online and Kate is not sure how to tell if something is a fad! She doesn't know what to believe.

Kate learns that some websites are more reliable than others. She found a resource on the Dietitians of Canada website that helps her determine if facts she reads online are accurate. She realizes that the nutrition information she originally believed from websites was not all true. By asking herself a few questions she finds she is more critical of what she reads on websites.

Is the website promising a quick fix or a miracle cure?

Do I have reasons to mistrust the person, organization or company that runs the website?

Are they trying to sell me something instead of educating me?

Are the website writers unqualified to be giving me nutrition information?

Do they have facts that sound too good to be true?

Does the information come from personal opinions rather than scientific evidence?

Is the content missing reviews or verification by medical experts?

Are the website claims based on a single study that may draw the wrong conclusion?

Now Kate knows that if she answers "yes" to most of these questions, the websites may not be reliable.

Seek support. Kate learned that she should not trust everyone who has an opinion about food and nutrition. Athletes are often targeted in marketing campaigns promising the next quick fix to improve performance and body composition. Instead, Kate will look for sites that aren't trying to sell something and that rely on science rather than opinions. She will check the credentials of the writers, and look for sites written by regulated health professionals whose work is reviewed by other experts.

Do you sometimes feel like you are drowning in misinformation too? Make an appointment with a registered dietitian for advice. You can also visit these sites, which are filled with reliable information:

- dietitians.ca
- coach.ca
- healthycanadians.gc.ca

Adapted from the Dietitians of Canada's Nutrition Month campaign materials. Find more information about Nutrition Month at nutritionmonth2017.ca.