

EAT BETTER

Registered nutritionist Anita Bean reveals the truth behind the latest food trends

Even gluten-free versions aren't always virtuous



Risks of going gluten free

It's such a trend that more than one in five people now regularly buy foods labelled 'gluten-free'. But unless you're part of the 1% of the population that suffers from coeliac disease, or the small percentage (1%-5%) that may suffer from non-coeliac gluten sensitivity, going gluten free isn't necessary and may even harm your health, say experts. Those who switch to processed gluten-free foods without medical guidance may develop iron and B vitamin deficiencies (many gluten-free foods aren't fortified) and increase their calorie intake. So ask your GP about suspected allergies first.

HIT A PURPLE HEALTH PATCH

The secret to a long life and a healthy brain and heart? It could be purple food, say scientists. The extraordinarily long lifespan of people who live on the Japanese island of Okinawa has been in part attributed to their high consumption of purple sweet potatoes (they average more than half a kilo a day!). These exotic veg, along with other purple produce such as blackcurrants, blueberries, plums, blood oranges, blackberries, red cabbage, red grapes and aubergine are packed with anthocyanins, pigments that give the produce their rich purple colour.

Studies have shown that anthocyanins can help stave off type 2 diabetes, dementia and high blood pressure. That's because they release anti-inflammatory compounds that boost blood flow

and help keep your brain young. A 24-year study of 93,000 women found those who ate three or more servings of blueberries and strawberries a week had a 32% lower risk of heart attack compared with those eating them once a month or less. Scientists at Norwich Institute of Food Research recommend eating, ideally, two portions of purple fruit and veg as part of your five a day. Topping the list are blackcurrants as the best source of anthocyanins (with 592mg per 100g), then blackberries, blueberries, aubergine, red cabbage and purple sweet potato.

For hearts and minds, eat more purple fruit and veg



KEEP MUM ON WEIGHT

The less you comment on your child's weight, the better! Researchers found that women who recall their parents making negative remarks about their size are more likely to be overweight as adults. Those with a healthy BMI were nearly a third less likely to recall parents making comments. If you're worried about your child, don't criticise them or suggest they go on a diet. Instead, encourage healthy choices by:

- ◆ Eating together - one study found children who regularly ate with their family were far less likely to be overweight by 14.
- ◆ Setting a good example - children are more likely to copy what you do than obey you.
- ◆ Avoid commenting on your own weight, or anyone else's. Avoid skipping meals and fad diets.
- ◆ Keep healthy foods, like fruit and veg, to hand all the time. □



Encourage good eating habits to keep weight off

SMALL CHANGES, BIG DIFFERENCE

Find out how far you'd have to walk to burn off your favourite teatime treat

◆ Tesco Finest extra fruity hot cross bun	218 cal		2.7 miles
◆ Waitrose all butter sultana scone	227 cal		2.8 miles
◆ Costa Belgian chocolate teacake	399 cal		5.0 miles
◆ Starbucks luxury fruit toast	481 cal		6.0 miles
◆ Warburtons crumpet	98 cal		1.2 miles
◆ Sainsbury's Belgian bun	391 cal		4.9 miles