



DEALING WITH FOOD FADS AND NUTRITION MISINFORMATION

Many people are now taking their personal health and nutrition decisions very seriously. As we are in the golden age of social media, information about health and nutrition is easily accessible. However, this access comes with an increase in food fads and misinformation. Misleading information can have harmful impacts on public health and our individual well beings. Health fraud information can come from social media influencers or even food supplement and drug companies promoting products with unsustainable health claims.

THE ROOT OF MISINFORMATION

A lot of times social media influencers are sharing stories or 'tips' on health and nutrition that has worked for them. While these can be really convincing, there is often an extreme lack in science and testing to back up their claims. Some content can also be based in fear and emotion. For example, someone might state "this food causes cancer" but offer no proof or scientific backing to support their claim. Instead they impart fear to promote the avoidance or absence of certain foods or diet trends. It is also important to understand that when seeking information we might have our own biases. We might only be seeking information that aligns with their beliefs, whether it might be wrong or right. So it is crucial to be open minded and be open to hearing other information.

MAKING INDIVIDUAL PORTIONS

One of the biggest challenges on social media is that science does not always "go viral". This is because scientific communication is often slow and continuous which does not mesh well with our fast pace social media content sites. We need to give certified health professionals a bigger voice. Look for content creators that are registered dietitians, doctors, and public health experts. These professionals often back up their claims with science and are highly educated in their specific fields. Look for health professions with credentials such as CHES, M.S, RDN, RD, Ph.D, or M.D. because these individuals have undergone continued education in order to become an expert in their field.

Websites should also come from credible web addresses such as those ending in .gov, .edu, and .org. For articles and blogs you may look up the author and see their credentials.





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HOLDING INFLUENCERS AND MEDIA PLATFORMS ACCOUNTABLE

The sad truth is that many people actually trust influencers and content creators more than doctors or dietitians. This is because influencers and content creators are seen as relatable and likeable. While this may seem true, often their content is driven by sponsorships and a want to increase their following. Since their primary motives are not to use science based facts to help others, this leads to misinformation being used solely for profit gains.

We can hold influencers and content creators by disengaging with their content that promotes misinformation. Also, you can leave gentle feedback in the comment sections when you come across misinformation. While we hold influencers and content creators, we can encourage better content with science backed information by promoting the content from credible professionals.

PROMOTING NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION

It is vital that we are promoting nutrition education and the need to learn more. The better understanding we have surrounding nutrition, the easier it is to point out misinformation online. You can start by understanding basic nutrition terms such as calories and macronutrients, learn to be able to interpret and read nutrition labels ingredient lists, then grasp the basic principles of a balanced diet based on evidence based-guidelines.

Try taking nutrition education classes or attend seminars that highlight major nutrition topics. Communities may also hold workshops, events, or have gardens for you to get some hands-on experience in community nutrition.

