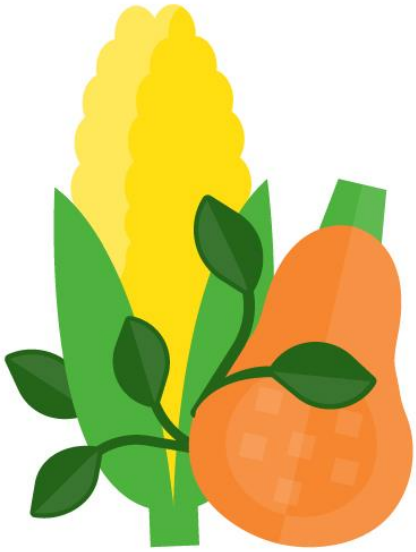
FANLit
FOOD AND NUTRITION LITERACY

Appendix 1

Food and Nutrition Misinformation Jigsaw Worksheet



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Food and Nutrition Misinformation: Jigsaw Information

What is nutrition misinformation? **Name: _____**	**Who/What are nutrition experts?** **Name: _____**
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How to recognize reliable food and nutrition advice in the media. **Name: _____**	**Who is more likely to believe food and nutrition misinformation?** **Name: _____**
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Appendix 2

Food and Nutrition Misinformation Jigsaw Information

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A: What is Nutrition Misinformation?

Food Fads and Fad Diets are defined as unusual diets and eating patterns that promote short-term weight loss, with no concern for long-term weight maintenance or overall health. These diets are often trendy and may be popular for short periods of time. Food fads and fad diets have no scientific basis and promote ideas that consuming (or not consuming) certain food items, vitamin and mineral supplements, and combinations of certain foods, will help one lose weight or prevent/cure a disease. Examples include the “grapefruit diet” or “low carb diet.”

Health Fraud is similar to food fads and fad diets, except that it is intentionally misleading, with the expectation that a profit will be gained. Health fraud includes products or diets that have no scientific basis yet are still promoted for good health and well-being. Common examples include promises of “fast, quick, and easy weight loss,” or a “miracle, cure-all product.”

Misdirected Health Claims are misguided statements made by producers that lead consumers to believe a food is healthier than actually the case. Examples include foods that are low in fat or low in carbohydrates, yet still high in calories.

Consumers should be aware of these top ten red flags for misleading claims:

1. Recommendations that promise a quick fix.
2. Dire warnings of danger from a single product or regimen.
3. Claims that sound too good to be true.
4. Simplistic conclusions drawn from a complex study.
5. Recommendations based on a single study.
6. Dramatic statements that are refuted by reputable scientific organizations.
7. Lists of “good” and “bad” foods.
8. “Spinning” information from another product to match the producer’s claims.
9. Stating that research is “currently underway,” indicating that there is no current research.
10. Non-science-based testimonials supporting the product, often from celebrities or highly satisfied customers. (Bellows & Moore, 2013)

B: Who are Nutrition Experts?

A qualified nutrition expert is known as a Registered Dietitian (RD) and has a specialized degree in dietetics, nutrition, public health, or related sciences from an accredited university. These individuals may also hold advanced degrees such as M.Sc., M.Ed., Sc.D., M.D. or Ph.D., and must undergo continuing education on a regular basis. On the other hand, the terms “nutritionist” and “diet counselor,” are not regulated and may be used by self-proclaimed experts without proper qualifications. (Bellows & Moore, 2013)

Is there a difference between a dietitian and a nutritionist? Sometimes yes, sometimes no! Some dietitians have a job title that includes nutritionist such as “community nutritionist”. To be sure you are accessing the most qualified nutrition professional, look for the initials RD or PDt (DtP in French) after the health professional's name or ask: “Are you a dietitian”? Dietitian is a protected title across Canada, just like physician, nurse and pharmacist. Nutritionist is also a protected title in Alberta, Quebec and Nova Scotia.

What do dietitians do? Dietitians translate the science of nutrition into terms you can understand. They unlock food’s potential and support healthy living for their patients, clients, and communities. A dietitian would not just hand you a diet or a list of foods not to eat and send you on your way or promote or sell you unnecessary food or supplements. Dietitians look beyond fads and gimmicks to deliver reliable, life-changing advice tailored to your objectives as well as personal needs and challenges. (Dietitians of Canada, 2020)

C: How to Recognize Reliable Food and Nutrition Advice in the Media

Internet: Websites should be from credible web addresses ending in .edu (an educational institution), .gov (government agency), or .org (non-profit). Any web pages that end in .com (commercial) or .net (networks) should be reviewed with caution.

Books, newspapers, and magazines: Examine the author's qualifications. He or she should be educated in the field of nutrition/dietetics, and preferably hold a degree from an accredited university (RD, DTR, LD, or MD). These individuals should also belong to a credible nutrition organization. For example, Dietitians of Canada.

Television: Make sure that the findings are well-researched and reputable; one study doesn't make a finding absolute. Be critical and look for follow up studies.

For all media sources: Make sure the information is referenced with cited sources. Seek out multiple perspectives regarding nutrition advice, and ask a nutrition expert about the source of the findings. Ensure that the information is current and informing, not attempting to advertise or sell a product. (Bellows & Moore, 2013)

D: Who is More Likely to Believe Food and Nutrition Misinformation?

Alternative treatments are designed to appeal to many individuals, however, certain age groups or those with a particular medical condition are more likely to be targeted. A healthy lifestyle-including a nutritious diet, regular physical activity, and avoiding tobacco products, may help delay conditions associated with aging, chronic pain, and other conditions.

Adolescence: Adolescents may experience feelings of insecurity about physical development, causing many to experiment with products that promise to enhance appearance or speed up development. Weight loss methods are extremely popular and as many as 46% of teens report that they are currently trying to lose weight. Fad diets are especially dangerous during adolescence because teens have high nutritional needs required to support rapid growth and development.

Older Adult: A large portion of healthcare fraud is targeted to those over the age of 65, and many victims belong to this population. Many products claim to reverse or delay conditions associated with aging, such as vitamins and minerals that claim to cure or prevent disease or lengthen life. There are no anti-aging treatments that have been proven to slow or reverse the aging process.

Weight-Loss: Weight-loss schemes and devices are the most popular form of fraud. Weight-loss is a multi-billion-dollar industry that includes books, fad diets, drugs, special foods, and weight-loss clinics. Some products or treatments may lead to weight-loss, but the effect is usually temporary. In addition, fad diets may not provide adequate calories or nutrients and can be harmful. Most dietary supplements are not reviewed and tested by the government before they are placed on the market. The only way to lose weight effectively and safely is to increase activity while decreasing food intake. Weight-loss should be gradual, 1 to 2 pounds per week, to allow for the development and maintenance of new dietary habits. Consult a Registered Dietitian or medical professional to determine a safe and effective weight loss program.

Athletes: Athletes may be susceptible to unsubstantiated claims for ergogenic aids, or performance enhancing supplements, as they attempt to gain a competitive edge. Ergogenics are defined as substances or procedures that are reported to increase energy or otherwise enhance athletic performance. Athletes that already adhere to proper training, coaching, and diet, may look for an advantage by resorting to nutritional supplements. (Bellows & Moore, 2013)

References:

Bellows, L. & Moore, R. 2013, September. Nutrition misinformation: How to identify fraud and misleading health claims. Colorado State University. https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/nutrition-food-safety-health/nutrition-misinformation-how-to-identify-fraud-and-misleading-claims-9-350/

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