



when “healthy” habits backfire

Seemingly health-conscious decisions that are bad for you.

loads of juice

While fruit juice is obviously a better choice than fizzy drinks, it doesn't mean you should be draining the bottle like it's a water substitute. “You should limit your intake of fruit juice to around 250ml [a small cup] a day,” advises Kristen Beck, CLEO's resident nutritionist and director of Beck Health & Nutrition (beckhealth.com.au).

“The process of juicing fruit removes the majority of the dietary fibre and concentrates the sugar content. Eating a piece of fruit and drinking water is a far better option than juice.”

a zillion sit-ups

Dying to show off that crop top you picked up, and think a gruelling regimen of crunches is a must? Bad news: “Doing 100 crunches a day will *not* lead to a sixpack. Only working on the superficial muscles of the abdomen will lead to a weak core and lower back, and poor posture,” says personal trainer Rachael Fenech (fitnessessentials.com.au). “The core muscles are what you need to be working on.” If you want a flat stomach, ask a personal trainer to incorporate medicine ball exercises into an overall body program.

cutting carbs

This is, by far, the most common “healthy” habit that backfires. “Cutting carbs is often recommended to speed weight loss, but, in reality, it quickly zaps you of all your energy, makes you cranky and much less able to complete effective exercise sessions,” says Beck. Instead of restricting your carb intake, you should focus on limiting or cutting out refined and highly processed carbs, such as white breads and pasta, and food and drinks with a high sugar content. Replace them with wholegrain breads and cereals, fruits and veggies.

avoiding fruit

Beck has had many clients tell her they avoid eating fruit under the mistaken belief that it has too much sugar. “While fresh fruit does contain some sugar, it also has dietary fibre, water, vitamins and minerals. The reality is that fresh fruit is almost always going to be a healthier option than anything else you're going to eat,” she says.

exercising every single day

If exercising is good, surely working out as much as possible is better, right? Wrong! Fenech advises scheduling recovery days into your fitness routine. “The most important thing is to listen to your body. If you feel overtired or in pain, give your body time to rest.”

diet soft drinks

Says Beck, “Because artificial sweeteners [which are found in diet soft drinks] have such an intense level of sweetness, drinking large amounts over a long period of time can actually cause you to crave sweeter foods than you normally would, so you end up eating more sugar.” She adds, “You should drink water to keep you hydrated.”

not eating food after 6pm

“There's no evidence to prove that the food you eat late at night is more likely to be stored as fat,” explains Beck. “There's lots of research that shows people who skip meals are more likely to gain weight. And, at a practical level, [not eating after 6pm] is a really restrictive thing to do.” □