

'Eight hours' sleep! And you must eat breakfast!' The truth behind 10 of the biggest health beliefs

Level 1: Elementary / Pre-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. In pairs or groups, share how you try to stay healthy. Then discuss the questions.

1. Do you go to the gym? Do you do exercise in another way?
2. What is the best way to lose weight if you are overweight?
3. What is a healthy diet? Do you believe dieting works?
4. Is it important to stay hydrated? How many glasses of water do you drink every day?

b. As a class, discuss what you think is the difference between a *fact* and a *belief*.

2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

common

increase

prevent

researchers

weights

1. _____ find, collect, and study relevant facts and ideas.
2. Something that is _____ is well known by most people.
3. To _____ something is to make it bigger.
4. To _____ something is to stop it from happening.
5. _____ are metal objects you can use in the gym to help your muscles get bigger.

amount

litres

performed

portions

stress

6. An _____ is a quantity of something.
7. If you have _____, you have completed an action or an activity.
8. _____ are the amount of food we give to people at one time.
9. _____ is when you feel angry, upset or nervous.
10. You can measure liquid in _____.

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4 January, 2023

Here are some common health beliefs and what science says now. Some beliefs are true and some are false.

1 'Lifting weights will give you big muscles'

SOMETIMES TRUE! If you lift weights over and over again, you will increase the size of your muscles. If you lift heavier weights fewer times, you will still become stronger but may not have big muscles.

2 'Breakfast is the most important meal of the day'

SOMETIMES TRUE! When you eat is important. If you want to lose weight, some researchers say eating a bigger breakfast will help. If you have a small breakfast and a big dinner, you might lose less weight.

3 'You should walk every day'

TRUE! Walking more is a good thing to do. Walking can help you to prevent heart disease and cancer.

4 'You need eight hours of sleep'

TRUE! In one of the largest ever sleep studies, people who slept for seven to eight hours performed better than those who slept more or less than that.

5 'You should eat five portions of fruits and vegetables a day'

TRUE! People who eat more fruits and vegetables may have lower levels of stress.

6 'You need to drink two litres of water a day'

FALSE! Staying hydrated is important. However, you don't just have to drink water. You can also drink other drinks, such as coffee, tea, milk or soft drinks. These will still help you to stay hydrated.

7 'A small amount of wine is better than not drinking'

FALSE! Some researchers have said that drinking alcohol is bad for you: one study found that even one or two drinks a day might reduce the size of your brain.

8 'Some exercises will give you a six-pack'

FALSE! If you want a six-pack, you can do exercises like crunches and sit-ups. However, having a six-pack has more to do with your body fat levels than the types of exercise you do.

9 'If you stop dieting, you will become overweight again'

SOMETIMES TRUE! Many people believe that if you stop dieting, you will put the weight back on. This is sometimes true: some people struggle to stay healthy after a diet.

10 'Red meat is bad for you'

SOMETIMES TRUE! Red meat has a lot of fat which is bad for you. However, you can eat some red meat and stay healthy. There is a difference between processed (bacon, sausages, burgers and deli meats) and unprocessed red meat.

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First published in *The Guardian*, 4/1/2023

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3 Comprehension check

a. Check the box for the sentence that correctly matches the article.

- Lifting weights will always give you big muscles.
Lifting weights makes you become stronger.
- Eating a bigger breakfast may help you to lose weight.
Eating a smaller breakfast may help you lose weight.
- Walking can help you to gain weight.
Walking can help you to prevent diseases.
- Sleeping for seven to eight hours is good for you.
Sleeping for more or less time than seven to eight hours is good for you.
- Eating fruits and vegetables means you may be less stressed.
Eating fruits and vegetables increases your stress levels.
- You should only drink water to stay hydrated.
You can drink lots of types of drinks to stay hydrated.
- Everyone says drinking alcohol is bad for you.
Some researchers say drinking alcohol is bad for you.
- If you do crunches and sit-ups, you will get a six-pack.
If you want a six-pack, you have to change your body fat levels.
- Dieting can make you overweight.
If you stop a diet, you may put the weight back on.
- Bacon, sausages, burgers and deli meats are processed red meats.
Bacon, sausages, burgers and deli meats are unprocessed red meats.

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4 Key language

a. Complete the table with the adjectives and comparatives from the article. Use the superlatives to help you.

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
big	bigger	biggest
1.	worse	worst
2.	3.	best
4.	healthier	healthiest
heavy	5.	heaviest
low	6.	lowest
7.	smaller	smallest
strong	8.	strongest

b. Match the parts of the conditionals. Check your answers in the article.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. If you lift weights over and over again, | a) some researchers say eating a bigger breakfast will help. |
| 2. If you lift heavier weights fewer times, | b) you can do exercises like crunches and sit-ups. |
| 3. If you want to lose weight, a big dinner, | c) you might lose less weight. |
| 4. If you have a small breakfast and a big dinner, | d) you will increase the size of your muscles. |
| 5. If you want a six-pack, | e) you will put the weight back on. |
| 6. Many people believe that if you stop dieting, | f) you will still become stronger but may not have big muscles. |

5 Discussion

a. Discuss the following statement.

"An apple a day keeps the doctor away"

6 In your own words

- a. Choose one of the health beliefs featured in the article. Do some online research into the belief and whether it is true and based on scientific research or just a belief some people have.
- b. Share your research in small groups.