

[IMAGE]

How Good Is Your Diet?

By Editorial Staff

Probably not as good as you think it is, unfortunately ... but you're not alone. Most people rate their diet as healthier than it really is, according to research, which means if you don't take a second look at what you're eating, you could be traveling down a dangerous road.

In reality, only a small percentage of people – approximately 15 percent – accurately gauge their diet quality, which means a whopping 85 percent are fooling themselves. The biannual National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey provided data on actual diet via 24-hour dietary recall questionnaires completed by participants; while the answer to a single question revealed whether their perception of diet quality matched reality: basically, *Do you consider your diet excellent, very good, good, fair or poor?*

Researchers ranked each food listed in participants' recall questionnaires to assess overall diet quality. Healthier foods included fruits and veggies, low-fat dairy products, seafood and plant proteins, whole grains and healthy fats. Less-healthy foods included foods high in added sugars, sodium and/or saturated fats, and refined grains.

Now here's where it gets really interesting: First, of the 85 percent who inaccurately perceived their diet quality, almost all (99 percent) overestimated it. In other words, you might think you're eating a healthy diet, but you're really not. Second, the group most accurate in their perception of diet: people who rated their diet as "poor" – they were right most of the time.

The moral to the story: Ask yourself, *How good is my diet?* How often do you eat vegetables? How about fish or plant protein? Whole grains? Then consider the opposite side of the equation: How often do you eat less-healthy foods – that you might consider healthy, but really aren't all that healthy? (You might want to analyze how often you eat food that comes in a box or bag, for starters.) Even the smallest of changes will increase the quality of your diet ... and the quality of your life.

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