

INSTA-SHAM DIETS: RISE OF THE 'INFLEXITARIAN'

- *More than one in ten Britons know dieting restricts their nutritional intake, but a fifth do nothing about it*
- *Millennials yo-yo'ing between extreme diets such as souping, juicing, Whole30, Teatoxing and others, glamourised on social media platforms*
- *Nearly half (48%) of girls have iron intakes below the lower reference nutrient intake (LRNI)*

Despite the growing popularity of a healthier 'flexitarian' approach to diet – where meat or fish is only eaten occasionally – a concerning trend is also emerging led by social media's food fanatics; a rise in people flitting from crash diet to faddy diet, compromising their health by reducing the vital nutrients needed for everyday life.

Experts today warn that Millennials regularly yo-yo'ing between juicing, souping, Teatoxing, fasting, gluten-free, blood-type or coconut oil-based, 'Sirtuan' (claiming to activate the 'skinny gene'), clean-eating, paleo diets and other extreme restrictions to food intake –often glamourised on social media – could result in nutritional deficiencies.

People sticking to the Paleo Diet – which focuses on only basic foods ostensibly eaten by our prehistoric ancestors – have posted more than 10 million photos on Instagram and #cleaneating has been used more than 10.5m times¹.

More than a third of evening meals now contain no meat at all² - with over a quarter of 18-24 year olds agreeing with the statement that 'by 2025 their diet will be mostly meat-free.' The Health and Food Supplements Information Service (HSIS) would encourage a 'thoughtful flexitarian' approach rather than the radical 'inflexitarianism' often promoted by social media influencers.

HSIS warns that drastically reducing key food groups can also reduce intakes of essential vitamins and minerals, which in turn could compromise health. It is vital that balance is maintained; the inclusion of multivitamin and mineral food supplements would help to ensure adequate micronutrient intakes despite restricted diets. New research³ from HSIS has discovered that despite **over one in ten (93%)** of 2,000 British adults surveyed knowing that food restrictions can lead to reduced nutrient intakes, **one fifth** still do not do anything about it. Of those who do take action, **less than two out of five (39%)** try to complement their diet with other foods, with only just **over a quarter (27%)** taking a supplement.

Dietitian, Dr Carrie Ruxton from HSIS explains, "Our approach to diet is changing, and while it is good that people are thinking more about what they eat or its environmental impact, they can be swayed by

the latest celebrity craze on social media. They shouldn't underestimate how a varied approach to diet that contains enough of all food groups will benefit them. Any diet that drastically restricts certain food groups also has to ensure enough vitamins, minerals and omega-3 fatty acids are obtained in other ways, such as through supplements. I would encourage a measured approach, which can ensure people stay healthy at the same time as satisfying their diet preferences and conscience."

Meat, fish and animal-derived foods, such as milk and eggs, are the only foods that naturally provide vitamin B12 which is involved in producing red blood cells, maintaining a healthy nervous system, and converting food to energy. It also helps to regulate the immune system and mood. A study published in the British Medical Journal in 2016 suggested 1 in 12 UK women aged 19-39 were vitamin B12 deficient⁴. Red meat is rich source of iron and deficiency of this nutrient is a key concern, especially for young women. 48% of girls and 27% of women have iron intakes below the lower reference nutrient intake (LRNI)⁵.

Iron is important because it helps your red blood cells carry oxygen around the body – and without enough oxygen, your organs and tissue cannot work effectively. The haem iron found in red meat is more easily absorbed by the body than the non-haem iron found in plant based foods, meaning many *inflexitarians* may be falling short of recommended daily intakes of this essential mineral. Both vitamin B12 and iron contribute to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue⁶.

ENDS

For further information or to arrange an interview with an HSIS spokesperson, please contact the HSIS press office hsis@nexuspr.com or call 020 7052 8888. Out of hours please call 07730 682111 or 07482 107207

ABOUT HSIS

HSIS (the Health and Food Supplements Information Service) is a communication service providing accurate and balanced information on vitamins, minerals and other food supplements to the media and to health professionals working in the field of diet and nutrition. Find out more at www.hsis.org.

References:

¹ Instagram figures, accessed 22.06.17

² Kantar Worldpanel, February 2017

³ A OnePoll omnibus survey of 2,000 UK adults aged 35 - 65 conducted in May 2017

⁴ Sukumar N, Adaikalakoteswari A, Venkataraman H, *et al*

Vitamin B₁₂ status in women of childbearing age in the UK and its relationship with national nutrient intake guidelines: results from two National Diet and Nutrition Surveys *BMJ Open* 2016;6:e011247. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-011247

⁵ National Diet and Nutrition Survey, 2014

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/labelling_nutrition/claims/register/public/?event=register.home