

37. Foods as Medicine

by Cheryl Block

A ¹We know that food provides us with nutrition and vitamins. ²Scientists are now studying and testing claims that certain foods, called “functional foods,” may also help to reduce the risk of disease if they are eaten regularly.

B ³One group of functional foods is fruits and vegetables. ⁴Scientists have found that tomatoes and broccoli contain natural chemicals that may help to fight disease.

C ⁵Another group of functional foods is whole grains, like oat bran. ⁶However, most people don’t eat oat bran by itself. ⁷Instead, oat bran is put into products such as oatmeal and certain breads. ⁸Scientists have found strong evidence that eating oat bran can lower cholesterol. ⁹Doctors have linked high levels of cholesterol to heart disease.

D ¹⁰In 1997, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) gave the Quaker Oats Company the first officially approved health claim for a food. ¹¹The FDA allowed the company to label its products with the health claim that eating oat bran lowers cholesterol. ¹²The FDA approves only health claims that have research to support them.

E ¹³Fortified foods have added vitamins and minerals. ¹⁴This idea started in 1830 when a chemist discovered that adding iodine to



salt prevented an enlarged thyroid gland, or goiter. ¹⁵The newest trend in fortified foods is adding herbs. ¹⁶Food companies have started making claims that these herbs will improve your health and even prevent disease. ¹⁷Tea with added ginseng says it gives you “a positive energy boost.” ¹⁸Soup with echinacea claims to “fortify the immune system.” ¹⁹Are these claims facts or opinions?

F ²⁰Many people believe herbs improve health and prevent disease. ²¹However, most herbs have never been tested to find out if this is true. ²²There are no standards for products that contain herbs. ²³Nor is there evidence to prove their claims as food additives.

G ²⁴Functional foods may prove to be of great benefit to people. ²⁵However, it is important to look for evidence of testing before believing what the product says. ²⁶Not all health claims may be facts.

DIRECTIONS: Circle the letter next to the correct answer or write the answer on the lines given. When asked for evidence, write the number of the sentence or the letter of the paragraph that best supports your answer.

1. According to the article, which of the following sentences is a fact?

Oat bran helps to lower cholesterol.

Tea with ginseng gives an energy boost.

Explain your answer.

2. Which two of the following can help you decide if a health claim is fact or opinion?

A. reading the fine print

B. checking for FDA approval

C. trying the food out yourself

D. looking for testing

Which sentence is the best evidence? _____

3. Based on the article, label the following statements as fact or opinion. (F or O)

Quaker Oats has products with an FDA label.

Herbs added to foods can improve health.

Ginseng is an herb.

Functional foods are of great benefit to people.

4. Why should you be careful about believing the claims on health foods?

Which paragraph is the best evidence? _____

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Reading level: 5.6

1. According to the article, which of the following sentences is a fact?
F Oat bran helps to lower cholesterol.
O Tea with ginseng gives you an energy boost.

Explain your answer.

The first sentence has evidence to support it. The second sentence makes a claim that is not proven.

2. Which two of the following can help you decide if a health claim is fact or opinion?
A. reading the fine print
B. checking for FDA approval
C. trying the food out yourself
D. looking for testing

Best evidence sentence: **12**

3. Based on the article, label the following statements as fact or opinion.
F Quaker Oats has products with an FDA label.
O Herbs added to foods can improve health.
F Ginseng is an herb.
O Functional foods are of great benefit to people.

4. Why should you be careful about believing the claims on health foods?

Not all health foods can prove that their claims are true.

Best evidence paragraph: **F**