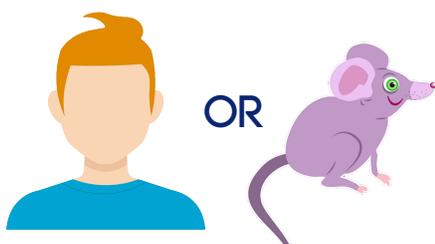


HOW TO EVALUATE NUTRITION & DIET RESEARCH

- Establishing that a specific food or diet "causes" a health outcome is exceptionally difficult because there are so many factors besides diet that affect health.
- The purpose of science is to develop theories and test them in a very rigorous way to examine if "A" causes "B."
- The effect of diet on health happens over a period of months and years and sometimes decades, not in a matter of days or weeks.

5 KEY THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING NUTRITION & DIET RESEARCH STUDIES

1 WAS IT CONDUCTED WITH PEOPLE OR ANIMALS?



Studies on people are more valid while studies with animal models can suggest a connection that requires more exploration.

2 HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE INCLUDED?



Small numbers ("n") are less compelling than large.

3 HOW LONG DID IT TAKE TO DO?



Dietary research must be carried out over months and preferably years.

4 DO OTHER STUDIES SUPPORT THIS NEW FINDING?



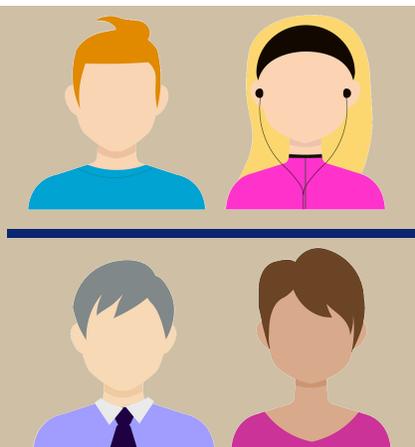
Have several universities or labs come to similar conclusions? If this is a completely "new" research outcome, it may require validation by additional studies before confirmed a true finding.

5 WHO PAID FOR THE RESEARCH?



Research paid for by an interested party is valid research but it's important to realize that it's only part of the story. It's important to know who paid for the research and their possible biases.

COMMON TYPES OF DIETARY STUDIES



RANDOMIZED CLINICAL TRIALS (RCT)

The gold standard of research. Participants are randomly assigned to groups that receive an experimental intervention. Studies are considered to be the most powerful when 'double-blind', meaning neither participants nor investigators know which treatment group participants have been assigned to.



EPIDEMIOLOGICAL STUDIES

Most dietary research depends on large scale population survey studies. These studies follow groups of people over the course of many years. Participants can be organized into "cohorts" or groups that share similar characteristics (e.g., age, level of physical activity, etc.).

META ANALYSES

Some types of research papers are based on analyzing several epidemiologic studies together. The advantage of doing this is greater statistical power, which means that it can be easier to see a connection between eating a certain way and health outcomes.

