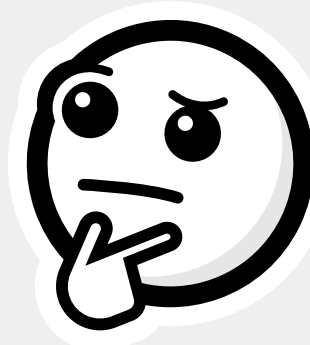
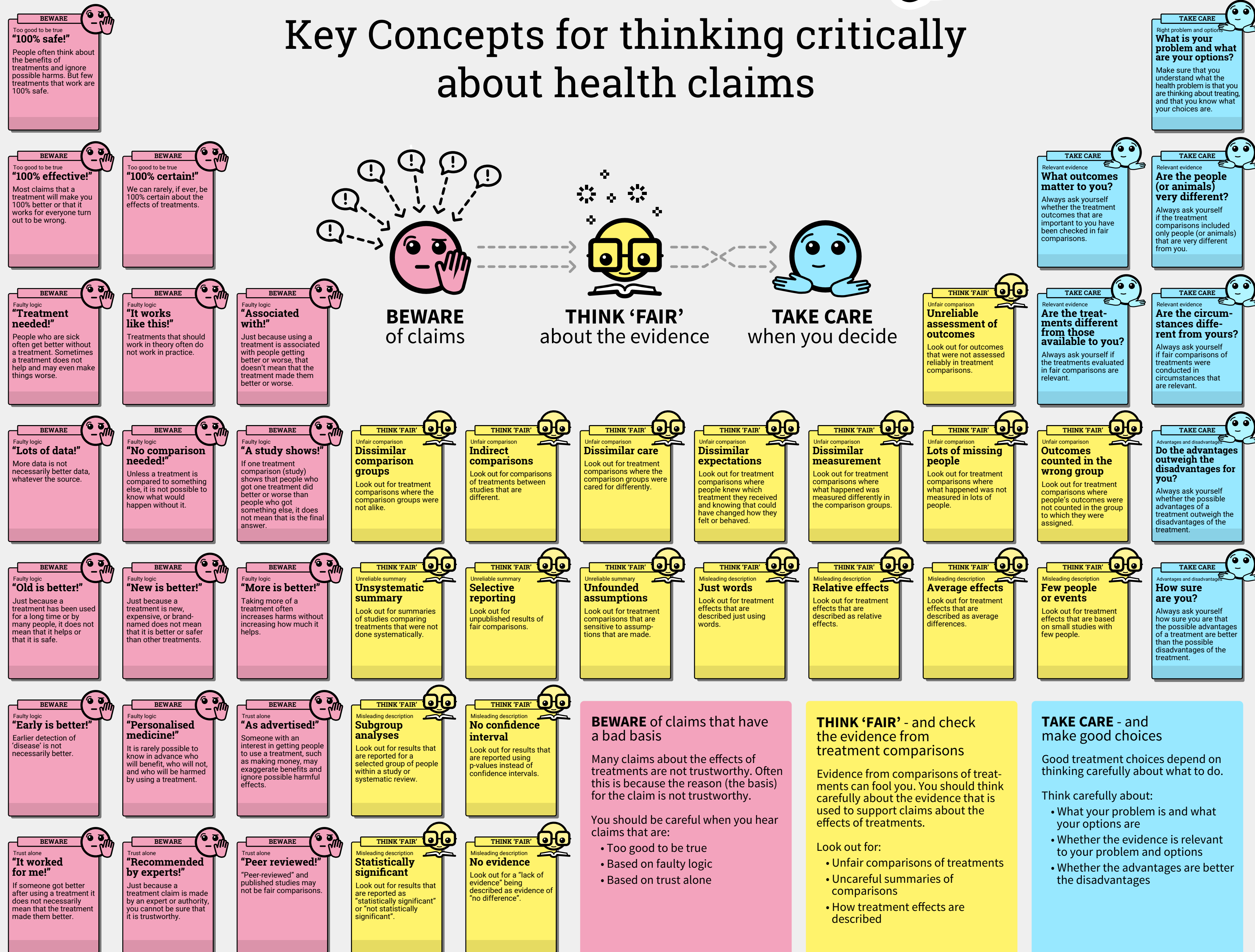


# That's a claim!



## Key Concepts for thinking critically about health claims



### Introduction

What should you eat? There are lots of claims about what you should and should not eat. For example, there are claims that chocolate causes acne, that it stimulates sexual desire, and that it is good for your heart. How can you know which of these claims are trustworthy? And how should you decide when to act on claims like these, or other claims about what is good or bad for your health?

There are lots of claims like this about what is good for our health. A **claim** is something someone says that can be right or wrong. A **"treatment"** can be anything you do for your health — for example, taking a medicine, exercising, eating chocolate, or not eating chocolate. It can also be something that we do for the health of a community — for example, making sure that water is safe to drink, making sure everyone has access to health care when they need it, or reducing the use of fossil fuels. An **effect** is something a treatment makes happen — like making you feel better or worse, making people more or less likely to have a heart attack or a stroke, or curing someone who is sick.

People make lots of claims about treatment effects. How can we tell which claims are right or wrong? To do this, you need to look at what supports their claim — its **basis**. For example, someone's personal experience is not a good basis for a claim about what is good for your health. This is because we don't know what would have happened if that person had done something else.

To know if a treatment (like eating chocolate) causes an effect (like sexual desire), the treatment has to be **compared** to something else (like not eating chocolate). Researchers compare a treatment given to people in one group with something else given to people in another group. Those comparisons provide **evidence** — facts to support a conclusion about whether a claim is right or wrong. For those comparisons to be fair, the only important difference between the groups should be the treatments they receive.

A **good choice** is one that uses the best information available at the time. For health choices, this includes using the best available evidence of treatment effects. Good choices don't guarantee good outcomes, but they make good outcomes more likely.

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