

Health Food Fakes

Think virtuous packaging means you're eating right? Think again.

You can't always judge a food by its label. A low-fat option might be loaded with unhealthy oils, while veggie offerings can include unhealthy amounts of sugar and salt. Here, the scoop on five supposedly good-for-you foods and what you're better off eating. —KAREN ASP

Turkey burger

REALITY CHECK

We think of turkey as healthier than red meat because it has less saturated fat, but in terms of total fat and calories, they can be virtually identical. Unless the patty is made with 93 percent lean meat, steer clear, says dietitian Kate Geagan, author of *Go Green, Get Lean*.

Smart Swap!

Choose wild salmon burgers, which are full of omega-3 fatty acids to benefit your brain and heart and also contain vitamin D. Look for Trident Seafoods frozen salmon burgers in your grocer's freezer aisle.



Full of omega-3s

Reduced-fat peanut butter

REALITY CHECK

Reduced-fat peanut butter spreads can be as little as 60 percent peanut. (By law, products labeled "peanut butter" in the U.S. must be at least 90 percent peanut.) Nutritionally void ingredients like corn syrup solids, sugar, and unhealthy oils make up the difference.

Smart Swap!

Pick a full-fat option labeled "natural," or look for a layer of oil at the top of the jar. Check out the ingredients, too, which should list only two or three items, with peanuts first.



All-natural

Granola

REALITY CHECK

"Most granolas are packed with ingredients like nuts and oils that send the calorie count soaring," says dietitian Brooke Joanna Benlifer. And since they often contain added dried fruit and sweeteners, their sugar content can be high, too.

Smart Swap!

Try multigrain Cheerios, which are lower in fat and sugar and contain 110 calories per cup. If it's too hard to cut out granola entirely, be sure to use it sparingly.



Just add a little!

Veggie chips

REALITY CHECK

Whether they're made from whole root vegetables or have just a dusting of dried spinach, veggie chips are no substitute for actual vegetables. Plus, they're often fried and salted, meaning they could be loaded with calories and sodium, Geagan says.

Smart Swap!

Dig into air-popped popcorn, which has about 30 calories per cup and a higher concentration of antioxidants than some fruit. Still craving veggie chips? Choose a brand with at least two grams of fiber per serving.



Only 30 calories

Instant oatmeal

REALITY CHECK

"Instant oats have been heavily processed, so there's not as much fiber to satisfy you," says Benlifer. They also have a higher glycemic index than other oats, making your blood sugar spike and then crash, which can leave you hungry soon after eating.

Smart Swap!

Switch to steel-cut or "old-fashioned" oats with at least four grams of fiber per serving to stay satiated longer and help stabilize your blood sugar levels. For even more fiber, add berries or almonds.



More filling fiber!

THIS JUST IN!

The Latest Science on the Brain



Split Decisions

Ever walk into a room and forget why you came? Blame the doorway. University of Notre Dame researchers have shown that doorways serve as "event boundaries": Because the brain associates certain memories of events with locations, entering a new room can make it hard to recall a decision you came to in the one you just left.

Dress the Part to Act Smart

In a study at Northwestern University, researchers had subjects wear white coats while performing a test that measured attention. One group was told they had on doctors' coats; the other, painters' coats. Subjects in the first group outperformed those in the second by nearly 30 percent, suggesting that the effect our clothes have on us may be even more powerful than we thought.

Memory Makeover

The Pill might change how your memory works when you're emotional, say UC Irvine researchers. When they tested how well female subjects remembered a story about a family in a car crash, the women who were taking hormonal contraceptives homed in on the plotline (which is similar to how men recall stories), while those not on the Pill were better at retaining the narrative's details (from the presence of parked cars near the crash site to what the hospital looked like). —E.H.

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