

Five Foods to Skip if You Want to Lose Weight and Stay Slim

More than 20,000 new food and drink items hit our grocery store shelves each year and, with so much conflicting information about health and nutrition floating around, it can be challenging to know what you should and should not be putting in your body. Here are five foods with unwarranted health halos that aren't doing your body any favors, especially if you're trying to reduce or maintain your weight.

Fruit Juice



Eat your fruit—don't drink it. Juice adds calories in a concentrated form without any of the fiber found in real fruit, which is one of the best reasons to eat fruit. When you juice fruit and discard the pulp or don't include the peel, you're getting rid half or more of the fiber. If you like the idea of juice for the flavors it offers, add fresh fruit to your water.

Granola Bars



If it looks like a cookie and it tastes like a cookie...it's a cookie. At its core, granola is just a grain with added sugar and fat. Package it up in bar form and it gets even less healthy. Most commercial granola bars are made with refined grains and contain added sweeteners and fat, and they rarely feature whole grains, fiber or protein, which should be key components of a better-for-you bar. You can find great recipes for homemade granola bars that are full of fiber and flavor. Bypass the granola bar aisle and save yourself from what are clearly just cookies in disguise.

Flavored Yogurt



If you can tolerate dairy, there is nothing wrong with plain yogurt. Unfortunately, not all yogurts are created equal, and most are packed with added sugar. Fruited and flavored yogurts are the worst, as they pretend to feature fruit. If they actually did include real fruit, it would also contain fiber, which yogurt products don't. If you like fruited yogurt, make it yourself by adding real fruit to real yogurt and leave the flavored stuff on the shelf.

Veggie Chips



Veggie chip bags show pretty pictures of real vegetables, but the ingredient list tells a different story. Most vegetable chips are a variety of fried and salted versions of potato starch. While a potato is technically a vegetable, when you fry and salt it, you negate its nutritional value. In other words, veggie chips are glorified potato chips. You want real veggie chips? Cut up vegetables, brush with olive oil, sprinkle with a modest amount of salt and bake them. If you want potato chips, buy them, but don't pretend your veggie chips aren't French fries in disguise.

Pretzels

Somewhere in the fat-free frenzy of the 1990s, people got the notion that pretzels were a health food. Sure, they have no fat, but neither does white bread. And pretzels are just white bread with a little more crunch and salt. What about whole-grain



pretzels, you say? You'd be hard-pressed to find a pretzel in which the first ingredient is actually a whole grain. Even pretzels made with whole grains are mostly refined white flour that contains no fiber. If you want a satiating snack, choose nuts over pretzels. Nuts contain fat, fiber and protein, and are a much more satiating snack.

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