

# Medical Minute

## HEALTHY??!!



Can buying healthy foods make you fat? Ever feel like buying healthy foods gives you a license to splurge? Psychologists call this the licensing effect. I call it “I bought kale, therefore I deserve ice cream.” (Who am I kidding?? I would NEVER buy Kale!) But, just in case, here’s what happens: you toss a nice bunch of kale into your cart—assuming there is such a thing as a nice bunch of kale—and maybe add a bag of baby carrots. Suddenly your brain puts on a tiny judge’s robe and rules that you have been so virtuous, you are now legally entitled to visit the freezer aisle. YES! This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t buy healthy foods. It just means you may need a little willpower to keep your cart rolling past the ice cream without making eye contact and a fast grab of a Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough carton!

Is Coconut Oil a superfood? Products containing coconut, coconut oil, and coconut milk are popping up everywhere, with some claiming it’s the latest “superfood.” Not so fast there, Roadrunner. The FDA says coconut products can’t be labeled as “healthy” if they contain more than 1 gram of saturated fat. Even though some claim the saturated fat in coconut is different, the FDA isn’t buying it—and apparently the FDA is not easily charmed by tropical packaging. Some coconut products contain as much as 16 grams of saturated fat per serving! Wow! At that point, the coconut may need to stop wearing a halo and start carrying a warning label shaped like a tiny palm tree.

Zinc can help boost your immunity. Ensuring adequate zinc consumption could reduce the chances of getting serious infections. Zinc helps improve the function of T-cells, a special type of white blood cell that targets and destroys invading bacteria and viruses like a guided missile. Not only does zinc increase the number of T-cells, but it also improves their effectiveness, too—which is exactly the kind of overachieving behavior I like to see from my immune system. Where can you find more zinc? Shellfish, pork, cashews, peanuts, and chickpeas. More help in that area is greatly welcomed, especially if it arrives on a plate with cocktail sauce and does not involve kale.