

Medical Minute

GOOD NEWS

These products have less “bad stuff” than you might think.



By “bad stuff” — which I don’t really think is bad, but then again, I also think peanut butter counts as a food group—I mean less sodium, added sugar, or saturated fat. So, stop the presses and alert the snack aisle: there really are good-tasting foods out there that won’t send your doctor into a dramatic lecture with charts, sighing, and that look over the glasses. Well, do tell.

SALTED NUTS: What? But it has the word “salt” right in the name. That sounds suspiciously like a warning label. Yep, but nuts only need a sprinkle of salt to taste salty—they’re very efficient little snacks. For example, Blue Diamond Almonds have just 4% of a day’s sodium (85 mg) in $\frac{1}{4}$ cup, and the lightly salted version has only 2%. Impressive. Planters Dry Roasted Peanuts have 150 mg (7% of the daily limit), and the lightly salted version has only 3%. Neither amount is anything to worry about but check the labels on the kinds and brands you buy—because apparently even peanuts come with paperwork.

SWISS CHEESE: While cheddar, provolone, or shredded mozzarella have 150–250 mg of sodium per slice, Swiss cheese has only 60–100 mg per ounce. Bonus—you can get Swiss cheese with less saturated fat and only 70 mg of sodium per slice, like Jarlsberg Lite. Swiss cheese: full of holes, but somehow still making very solid choices. Yes, please.

PRE-POPPED POPCORN: Most, like Boomchickapop or Skinny Pop, are made with healthy, unsaturated fat (just about 1 gram or so in every 3 cups). To dodge added saturated fat, pick a flavor like “salted” or “sea salt” instead of “butter” or “white cheddar.” I know, I know—removing the words “butter” and “cheddar” from popcorn feels like canceling a small holiday, and then, why bother.

MARINARA SAUCE: Marinara has a reputation for being sugary because the old labels listed only “Sugars,” which lumped together the naturally occurring sugar in tomatoes and any added sugar. On the new Nutrition Facts label, it now shows that the 4–7 grams of sugar in $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of sauce is all natural. Even when some sauces add sugar, it’s usually only 1 or 2 grams. So marinara may be innocent after all. The tomatoes would like an apology.

PEANUT BUTTER: I LOVE some apple with my peanut butter! Most brands of nut butter are low in added sugar. Two tablespoons of regular Jif, Skippy, or Peter Pan have just 2 grams ($\frac{1}{2}$ tsp.) of added sugar, which is only 4% of a day’s worth. Watch out for those nut-poor spreads like Nutella—it has 19 grams of sugar in 2 tablespoons!!! At that point, the hazelnut is just there to make you think it might be healthy.