

Four health foods that are actually bad for you

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Healthy living can be harder than it sounds. You know you should exercise more and eat more nutritious food, of course, but did you also know that just because a food calls itself "healthy" doesn't mean it is? Ditto calling something vegan or calling it carb-free. You have to look beyond the labels and check out the ingredients to see which foods are the real deal and which are just a gimmick.

Here's a cheat sheet of four foods that you might think of as "[healthy snacks](#)" that are really not. This is stuff the nutritionist would nix in a jiffy.

VEGGIE CHIPS

You know you need to eat more veggies, but alas, puffs that claim to contain vegetables just don't cut it. Look at the ingredients and you will often find potato flour, cornmeal and rice flour as the mainstays. All that starch means big-time calories.

If you are looking to splurge, just go ahead and treat yourself to potato chips or pretzels. The veggie chips are almost as bad for you. As Time points out, one major brand only has 40 than regular old potato chips, which actually provide 1 gram fewer carbs and 1 extra gram of protein. Yikes.

Bottom line: If you really want to be healthy, stick with actual veggies. Crunch yourself silly with carrots or bell pepper slices or cucumber

wedges. Throw in some hummus and make it a hearty snack.

FRUIT SNACKS

This one really hurts if you are a mom because it's hard to find a snack that kids love that you can feel good about giving them. That's why fruit snacks seem like the sweet spot, right? Nope.

Sure there might be a smidge of fruit in there but there's usually also a cornucopia of corn syrup, gelatin, modified corn starch, and a host of artificial flavors, as Today cites.

Bottom line: You can get way more vitamins and fiber if you stick with real fruit. Maybe mix up a fruit salad for the kiddos with fresh blueberries, apple chunks and banana? It's not as convenient, certainly, but it is actually food.

VEGAN COOKIES

Just because it has vegan in the name does not mean it's actually good for you. Vegan cookies are a prime example because many are chock full of refined sugar and refined flour, and they are totally lacking in fiber and other nutrients.

Portion control is the key. One brand of vegan cookie actually has the nerve to claim that a serving is one half of a cookie. That means that one 4.25-ounce vegan cookies is actually two servings. If you gobble down that whole cookie, as Time notes, you will have sucked down 480 calories, 78 grams of carb, including 57 grams as sugar, with just 2 grams of fiber.

Bottom line: If you really want healthy vegan cookies, you might need to bake up a batch at home. Throw in some whole foods, such as almond

butter, rolled oats and chia seeds and jazz it up with a little bit of cinnamon, maple syrup and vanilla.

TRAIL MIX

Trail mix varies widely depending on who makes it, as Time puts it. Many brands contain dried fruit that's been drenched with sugar and then treated with artificial preservatives. Then they throw in candy-coated milk chocolate orbs and such. This style of trail mix packs a hefty 200 calories into a golf-ball size serving with, little nutritional substance.

Bottom line: If you crave healthy trail mix, you might have to DIY. Start with a base of nuts (think almonds, walnuts, pecans or pistachios) and seeds (pumpkin or sunflower) and then give it some zing with unsweetened chunks of dried [fruit](#) (go with chopped dried figs, plums or dried cherries.) Chocolate lovers may want to toss in a little dark chocolate into the mix.

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