

Wellness Wednesday



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6 "Healthy" Foods That Fitness Experts Avoid Eating

Is there a health halo around the ingredients you're eating?

The pressure to eat nutritious foods and to live a healthy lifestyle is certainly nothing new, but recent trends that promote "wellness" have turned health-conscious eating into an even bigger industry. While increasing your intake of fruits and vegetables and focusing on energy-boosting proteins and whole grains are recommended by fitness professionals, there are certain "healthy" food items that, according to the experts, don't work for everyone.

We asked professional fitness trainers, athletic coaches, sports nutritionists and physical therapists about the foods that they personally try to avoid. They offered up these six items that are traditionally viewed as healthy, but that can cause complications for some eaters. Keep in mind that not all diets are for everyone, so talk to your doctor before making dietary changes.



Low-Fat Yogurt And Dairy

Skim milk has been a huge part of diet culture for decades now, but our experts generally agreed that dairy products that claim to be low-fat aren't nearly as beneficial as they might seem.

"You need to eat fat in order to absorb fat-soluble vitamins, [like] A, D, E and K. I tell my clients I'll eat low-fat dairy products if they can show me a low-fat cow," said Stephen Holt, a certified nutrition coach and personal trainer. Reduced-fat yogurt often shows up in recommendations for healthier meal alternatives. "It might have fewer calories, but low-fat yogurt usually has added sugars to make up for the lower fat," warned Jamie Boudreaux, a golf coach and founder of Golfer Geeks.

For example, Dannon Plain Whole Milk Yogurt contains 7 grams of sugar per serving, whereas its Plain Nonfat Yogurt contains 10 grams of sugar in a serving of the same size. Boudreaux added that low-fat yogurt "might not make you feel as full as full-fat yogurt. I figured this out when I tried using low-fat yogurt in my pre-workout meals, and I got hungry way sooner than I wanted."

That experience is backed up by Harvard Medical School, which explained that both the high protein content of full-fat yogurt and its richer and more luscious flavor "helps with satiety."

Boudreaux decided to switch to full-fat Greek yogurt, "which has more protein and healthy fats to keep me full longer."

Generally speaking, nutritionists and fitness coaches told us that replacing low-fat dairy products with smaller portions of full-fat products made more sense for long-term health goals.

Still, some individuals with respiratory issues like asthma may find that dairy creates discomfort for them, as it can "create mucus on the lungs," according to Liana Werner-Gray, a certified nutritionist, natural food chef and author. Werner-Gray prefers "a coconut milk yogurt."

Sports Drinks, Energy Drinks

Sports drinks like Gatorade and Powerade have had a prominent presence at gyms and on athletic fields for decades now, and their caffeinated "energy drink" cousins like RedBull and Monster are popular among college students and night-shift workers seeking an extra boost.

But our experts cautioned that the benefits offered by sports drinks and energy drinks don't outweigh the negatives.

"Pre-and post-workout energy drinks are often loaded with unnecessary extra sugars and ingredients," explained Sami Ahmed, a physical therapist with the mid-Atlantic-based Centers for Advanced Orthopaedics.

Kacie Shively, a physical therapist with Game Changer Physical Therapy in Washington state, told us that sports drinks can vary widely in terms of their quality, so consumers should be on high alert for signs that the neon-colored drink in their hands is packed with sugar or other unhelpful ingredients.

"Most athletes know that electrolytes are vital for optimizing muscle function and performance," Shively said. "The problem is that the term 'sports drink' makes the consumer feel as though this drink is healthy and designed for athletes. In reality, many of these drinks contain excess sugars" or artificial ingredients.

Shively urges you to "look beyond the major brands you've seen on commercials for years." Check the sugar content and keep in mind the CDC's recommendation that adults limit their intake of added sugars to less than 10% of their daily calorie consumption. Shively advised sports drinks that "provide a variety of electrolytes, including sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium."

When it comes to caffeinated energy drinks, Chrisi Moutopoulos, a certified personal trainer and regional manager of Gymguyz, told us that the potential health risks should be taken seriously.

"Energy drinks have quickly become the new drink of choice for many people, especially teenagers," Moutopoulos said. "They are highly caffeinated, very high in sugar, and can contribute to increased blood pressure, weight gain, headaches, anxiety, dental problems, dehydration and heart disease. Many energy drinks contain well over 100 milligrams of caffeine, and the daily recommended caffeine intake for a teenager is 100 milligrams per day total."

Protein Bars

Protein bars are marketed as healthy and energizing options for active individuals and for athletes. But our fitness pros were skeptical.

“Protein bars are not going to give you the same bioavailable nutrients as eating whole protein,” said Bianca Beldini, a doctor of physical therapy and holistic life coach.

Some protein bars aren’t transparent about their ingredients, Beldini noted. “I recently had a patient send me a photo of a mass-produced Costco purchased protein bar, and [she] asked if it was a sufficient form of protein. I looked at the ingredients that made up this protein bar; it was filled with ‘natural ingredients’ of which none were pronounceable.”



Aroosha Nekonam, a certified personal trainer at Ultimate Performance Los Angeles, said protein bars aren’t an ideal source of this crucial nutrient.

“Compare a protein bar and a chicken breast,” Nekonam said. “Yes, they might contain similar amounts of protein, but that protein bar is essentially just a chocolate bar with protein in it. It is highly processed and full of different sweeteners and artificial flavors” and “it’s not going to give you the same energy, nutrients, and building blocks that a single-source ingredient — such as a chicken breast or a piece of salmon — will.”

Granola

Granola has a longstanding reputation as an all-natural, hippie-approved smart choice for healthy eating. However, pre-packaged granolas tend to run into the same issues as most boxed breakfast cereals: lots of sugar and artificial ingredients with no nutritional value. Even if store-bought granola claims to be whole grain, low fat or organic, they’re often “filled with added sugar and provide little to no protein or healthy fats,” said Leah Isaacs, a certified nutritionist with Root2Rise Nutritional Therapy.

Granola is primarily made of carbohydrates, and “starchy carbohydrates high in sugar are quick-burning, glucose-spiking, nutrient-deficient and fail to keep you full or energized long enough — in fact, they can wreak havoc on energy levels,” Isaacs said.

If you like your granola in the form of individually wrapped granola bars, you may want to consider that these snacks have the same problems as other forms of store-bought granola.

“Most granola bars are sweet junk food in disguise,” said Dominion Ezechibueze, a certified personal trainer with Minion Training. “Not all granola bars are bad, but the main ones are low in fiber and super high in sugar and other highly processed additives. I would consume a granola bar high in fiber and protein to give me proper energy for my workout, [but] conventional granola bars would do the complete opposite by dehydrating me and increasing cravings because of the high sugar contents.”

Plant-Based Meat Products

The rise of plant-based “meat” has been quick and dramatic, with popular fast food joints now featuring meat-free burger patties on their menus. But Karina Blackwood, a personal trainer and yoga instructor, echoes what has been previously reported: Vegan meat substitutes often include far more than healthy vegetables and natural ingredients.

“While some are tasty and convenient, many are highly processed and contain a lot of added sodium, preservatives and artificial ingredients,” Blackwood said. “In my opinion, it’s much better to stick to whole, minimally processed foods like vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins to support our health and fitness goals.”

If you’re craving a plant-based burger, consider skipping the meat substitutes in favor of a black bean patty or a chickpea patty. These contain substantial protein without undesirable add-ons.

‘Gluten-Free’ Bread

Obviously, gluten-free bread products are a positive development for those with celiac disease or other forms of gluten intolerance. For Jay Patruno, a nutrition manager and coach development manager at Orangetheory, gluten-free bread may be on his recommendation list for people with those conditions, but he doesn’t encourage gluten-tolerant clients to add these products to their shopping lists.

“Gluten is one form of protein found in grains” like wheat, barley, and rye, he explained. “It provides structure to the plant, as well as [to] the foods made from them.”

But without gluten, “something else (usually multiple things) has to be added to create an eating experience similar to the gluten-containing version,” Patruno said. These non-gluten ingredients can include additives like saturated fats, sodium and sugar that can prove irritating to the digestive system, and can result in empty calories.

“Have the real bread instead!” Patruno advised those without a medical need to restrict gluten intake.



VEGGIE KABOBS



105 Calories | Prep: 15 mins | Cook: 15 minutes mins | Total: 30 mins
YIELD: 6 servings | Course: Side dish | Cuisine: American

INGREDIENTS

- 2 large ears corn, shucked and peeled
- 1 1/2 medium red onions, cut into 6 wedges
- 1 yellow bell pepper, cut into 12 1-inch pieces
- 1 red bell pepper, cut into 12 1-inch pieces
- 1 zucchini, sliced into 12 slices
- 12 cherry tomatoes, or grape tomatoes
- olive oil spray
- 3/4 teaspoons kosher salt
- 3 tablespoons BBQ or teriyaki sauce, homemade or use your favorite
- 1 tablespoon water

These colorful, fresh veggie kabobs are perfect for throwing on the grill when you need a quick side dish.

This Veggie Kabob recipe will elevate your summer grilling game. They are perfect as a side dish for anything you're grilling or as a main dish served over rice or couscous. Bursting with colors and texture, the charred corn, red onion, bell pepper, zucchini, and tomatoes are finished off with BBQ or teriyaki sauce for extra flavor. So delicious and easy!

Nutrition Information

Serving: 1 kabob, Calories: 105 kcal, Carbohydrates: 24 g, Protein: 3.5 g, Fat: 1 g, Saturated Fat: 0.5 g, Sodium: 239.5 mg, Fiber: 3.5 g, Sugar: 11.5 g



INSTRUCTIONS



1. If using wooden skewers, soak about 1 hour.
2. Cut small ends off corn and cut each into 6 pieces, to give you 12 total.
3. Arrange the skewers, alternating each veggie so you have 2 pieces of each vegetable on each skewer. Spritz all over with olive oil and season with salt.
4. Preheat the grill to medium-high heat.
5. Combine BBQ sauce and water in a small bowl.
6. Place kabobs on the grill and cook, turning often until the vegetables are slightly charred and tender, about 10 minutes.
7. Brush the BBQ or teriyaki sauce on the veggies, the last minute of cooking, and turn once again.

FEATURED EXERCISE

https://www.self.com/gallery/best-hip-strengthening-exercises?utm_source=nl&utm_brand=self&utm_mailing=SLF_Daily_Clickers_101621&utm_campaign=aud-dev&utm_medium=email&bxid=5d83c6d0b90c2f6fa12dbf6a&cnid=58694802&hasha=f345ee2a9a599fc9bba98d4ed31cb9918&hashb=853e529f954dfe163d8cf15f77108ac9b57ee728&hashc=145ecc2d29124cf8e1a3c5d785358fdb37b6d2186046daa8c8e048ed9fba1424&esrc=bouncemulti_first&utm_term=SLF_Daily_TopClickers

Featured Exercise ► Lateral Lunge 

» Do it:

Like regular lunges, side lunges are a lower-body exercise. They primarily target large muscle groups in the legs, such as the hamstrings and quads. Lateral lunges also work the inner thigh muscles like the adductors and the outer glutes.

- Stand with your feet together, holding a dumbbell in each hand, arms by your sides.
- Take a big step (about 2 feet) out to the right. When your foot hits the ground, hinge forward at the hips, push your butt back, and bend your right knee to lower into a lunge. The weights should frame your right knee, and your left leg should be straight.
- Pause for a second, and then push off your right leg to return to starting position. Repeat on the other leg. That's 1 rep.
- Do 10-12 reps.



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Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.



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