

Foods That Aren't as Healthy as You Think

Reviewed By: [Brunilda Nazario, MD](#)
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Bulletproof Coffee

Some foods we think of as super-healthy? Not so much. Like "bulletproof" or "butter" coffee, which blends coffee with grass-fed butter and MCT oil, a supplement often made from coconut oil. Fans say it keeps them full longer, helps their brains stay sharp, and boosts energy. Some research does back up these benefits. But the saturated fat in coconut oil and butter can also raise your cholesterol and your risk of heart disease.



Kombucha Tea

Kombucha is fermented black or green tea. It has a small amount of alcohol, less than most craft beers. Some studies suggest kombucha may lower inflammation and promote gut health. But its health benefits are still largely unclear. And some brands are high in sugar, so always check the label. Some experts say you can safely drink 12 ounces of kombucha a day. Pregnant women and young children, though, should stay away.



Coconut Oil

Coconut oil is high in saturated fat. Research shows it can raise your cholesterol. There's also not much evidence for its rumored health benefits for things like weight loss and type 2 diabetes control. Try to limit saturated fat to less than 10% of your daily calories. Instead of coconut oil, try canola, olive, peanut, or sunflower oil, all of which have less saturated fat.



Gluten-Free Products

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye grains. You may think gluten-free eating is healthier. But that's mainly true if you have celiac disease (an immune response to gluten) or are gluten-sensitive. Many commercial gluten-free products are high in refined carbs, sugar, and salt. And you may miss out on the B vitamins and iron that are often added to wheat. A gluten-free diet is not meant to help you lose weight.



Raw Milk

Some say this unprocessed milk prevents asthma, allergies, cancer, and heart disease. These claims are misleading. Also, raw milk carries germs like E. coli and salmonella that can make you sick or even kill you. Processed or pasteurized milk does have less vitamin C. But raw milk is not a major source of this vitamin. Overall, pasteurized milk has similar nutritional benefits to raw without the risks to your health



Impossible and Beyond Burgers

These plant-based burgers fit into a vegan or vegetarian meal plan. But they're more of a splurge than a health food. The highly processed patties have about as many calories (240-260) and as much saturated fat (5-8 grams) as a lean hamburger. To boost nutrition, add veggies like spinach, lettuce, tomato, and onions, plus avocado or hummus for protein and fiber.



Smoothies

Some store-bought smoothies have lots of added sugar, little to no fresh fruit or veggies, and as many as 910 calories in a large serving. Skip them and blend your own. Focus on whole foods -- kale or baby spinach for a veggie boost, low-fat milk or yogurt for protein, and a little fresh or frozen fruit for fiber and sweetness. And watch your serving size. Calories go down quickly when you drink them.



Granola

Granola may seem healthy because it's made with high-fiber oats. But many brands contain coconut oil and loads of added sugar. Make your own with rolled oats, slivered almonds, shredded coconut, and a pinch of salt. Mix them with a little canola oil and maple syrup. Spread onto a baking sheet and pop into a 250-degree oven for 75 minutes. Let it cool, and store in an airtight container.



Processed Fat-Free Foods

Some fat-free foods, like plain yogurt and skim milk, are healthier. But often, fat-free products contain added sugar or corn syrup. Many also have chemical additives to make up for the missing fat. You need fat in your diet, for energy and to help you absorb vitamins. Avoid saturated and trans fats. But don't fear the healthy kind from nuts, seeds, avocados, and fish like salmon and sardines.



Agave Sweeteners

These natural sweeteners come from the agave plant. They have a tad more nutrients, like iron, calcium, potassium, and magnesium, than table sugar. But they're no healthier. Agave nectar or syrup has just as many carbs and calories as sugar, and 70%-90% more fructose. As with other added sugars, limit how much you take in. One teaspoon of agave sweetener equals a serving.



Energy Bars

Energy bars are a quick snack with a healthy reputation. But many are loaded with sugar, saturated fat, and processed add-ins. Look for bars with a short list of ingredients -- things like nuts, dried fruits, seeds, and dark chocolate. And remember, they're snacks, not meal substitutes. Aim for less than 300 calories per bar



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