



**Benefits Bridge**

by UNITED CONCORDIA DENTAL

MANAGING WELLNESS

## KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY FOOD

- **Research what you put into your body—just because it says "healthy" on the label, doesn't mean it's the best choice for you**
- **Some yogurts, energy bars, packaged turkey slices and multigrain loaves of bread are misleading options for healthy choices**
- **It's important to research basic nutrition principles and understand what it is that makes food healthy or unhealthy**



Posted by [ERIN OLLILA](#) April 12, 2018

When it comes to choosing between healthy and unhealthy food, the options available can be overwhelming. Anyone who's spent time in a health food store knows that there's a "healthy" version of just about *everything*.

However, just because it says "healthy" on the label, doesn't mean it's the best choice for you. Here are five items often touted as healthy options that you might be surprised to learn aren't that good for you.

## 1. Flavored Yogurts

It's true that yogurt has many beneficial properties, including probiotics, calcium and vitamin B. It's also a good source of protein. But it's important to understand that all yogurt is not created equal. Many flavored yogurts contain a good amount of sugar per serving. You'll also find a lot of artificial sweeteners, flavors and colors on the label, as well as other unhealthy additives.

**What to eat instead:** If you like yogurt, buy the options that are organic and plain. You can flavor it with fruit or other ingredients (if necessary) at home. It's a good idea to look for yogurt that has been vat-pasteurized and made from raw milk. For the healthiest option, consider learning how to make your own yogurt.

## 2. Packaged Turkey

Turkey is a lean protein, which is a healthier option than most other lunch meats. That being said, the packaged turkey you might find in your supermarket is *not* a healthy choice. That's because it contains a very high amount of sodium. According to [Cleveland Clinic](#), too much sodium causes you to retain fluids and can also raise your blood pressure. It's important to avoid other high sodium foods for this very reason.

**What to eat instead:** Consider cooking and slicing a fresh turkey breast yourself. If you must buy prepackaged turkey, be sure to look for the reduced sodium variety or talk to someone at your delicatessen about whether there are lower-sodium options they can slice on the spot for you.

## 3. Multigrain Bread

The word "multigrain" does not necessarily mean the bread you're considering buying is a healthier option. Many multigrain breads often contain refined grains that are low in fiber and whole grains.

"Unless you find that '100 percent' on the package and 'whole wheat' listed as the first ingredient on the label, the bread is simply a refined loaf of bread with synthetic nutrients added to replenish those natural nutrients lost in the milling process," the [Cleveland Clinic](#) notes. If your bread label has refined flour as the first ingredient, stay away.

**What to eat instead:** Look for loaves of bread that are 100 percent whole grain or whole wheat to maximize your health benefits.

## 4. Energy Bars

Energy bars are often marketed as [a healthy snack](#) or pick-me-up, especially after exercising. However, many energy bars contain more sugar and calories than a regular candy bar. This makes some energy bars *surprisingly unhealthy*.

**What to eat instead:** If you are going to buy energy bars, be sure to look for ones under 200 calories that have less than 20 grams of sugar per serving. For a healthier alternative, try making your own energy bars or bites at home. A serving of nuts can also be a great alternative to refuel after a workout (without all the additives).

## 5. Soy

Soy is often advertised as a vegetarian-friendly source of protein. However, according to the [American Nutrition Association](#), soy may increase one's risk of developing breast cancer. It also contains several natural toxins that can make it difficult to digest protein. It's best to avoid this product in anything other than small doses.

**What to eat instead:** Consider almond milk or other dairy alternatives. Fermented soy products like tempeh, soy sauce and natto are also safe to eat.

When considering what [foods to purchase](#), it's important to note that there is a lot of misleading information out there. Read labels and do your own research before buying anything. These five examples are just some of the *many* foods that are advertised as "healthy" when they might not be as good for you as you think they are. That's why it's wise to research basic nutrition principles and understand what it is that makes [healthy and unhealthy food](#).

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