

DON'T FALL FOR THE HYPE: FOOD PACKAGE MARKETING

Judging from the front of a package, a food can look like a healthy, good buy. Don't be fooled by this advertising lingo. Here are 6 common claims you might find and how to read between the lines to see what they really mean.



Organic or Natural

USDA organic foods are grown or produced under special guidelines, but that doesn't mean they're healthier. "Natural" is usually just a marketing word, and it doesn't necessarily mean a food is safer or more wholesome. Be careful because organic and natural foods still can be high in unhealthy fats and calories.

✓ NO TRANS FAT

No Trans Fat

When something has no trans fats, that's a good thing. But watch for saturated fats when you read the nutrition facts. In general, if something brags "no fat" -- be suspicious. It may be full of sugar, and it may not fill you up, so you could be hungry again soon.



SUGAR FREE

Sugar-Free

Words like "free," "zero," and "no" aren't a green light to eat lots and lots of any food. Calories will add up fast when you eat several servings. Artificial sweeteners are often used to make sugar-free foods taste good. While they may tame your sweet tooth temporarily, they can still leave you hungry. Those sweeteners don't give your body energy or nutrients. They can even cause headaches or an upset stomach in some people.

with REAL FRUIT

Made With...

Just because a package brags that the food was "made with" whole grains or real fruit doesn't mean that it actually has a lot of whole grain or fruit in it. Check the label and make sure that ingredient is 1 of the first you see on the ingredients list. The lower on the list, the less there is of it in that food. If apple is near the bottom of the list, for example, chances are that's not enough fruit to make the food healthy.



Plus...

Watch out for "added," "plus," "extra," "fortified," or "enriched." These foods have added nutrients — like calcium or fiber — but may be heavily processed and not as wholesome as other choices (for example, a fruit drink instead of 100% juice, or refined wheat bread instead of whole wheat bread). To check, read the nutrition facts panel and ingredients list.

Low-Fat CRACKERS

Low-Fat, Lite, or Low-Calorie

A "lite" or "light" food means it has 1/3 fewer calories or 1/2 less fat compared to the regular version of that same food. "Low-fat" means 3 grams of fat or less per serving. "Low calorie" means less than 40 calories per serving. These can be healthier choices than full-fat or full-sugar versions, but their sugar or fat content can still make them foods to eat in small portions.