



Healthy? Think Again!

Chips made with red potatoes and olive oil.
Sugar snap pea crisps in corn oil.
Gluten-free cookies.
Multi grain crackers.
Chicken nuggets made with organic chicken.



What do all of these have in common? They sound healthier than they really are. Let's face it – the job of food marketing is to sell product. Add a healthy ingredient to a food, and it makes it look like a healthy food. Ironically, it is those of us who want to make healthy choices that are the most likely to be hooked, but don't get fooled by buzz words.

Potato chips, cookies, and any fried and salted food (even if it's a vegetable) is basically junk food. It doesn't mean that you can't enjoy some – just acknowledge that you are eating a processed snack food and watch portions. Don't fall into the trap of thinking its okay to eat more because it's healthy.

For example, Snapea Crisps are snap peas baked in corn oil. That might sound healthy, but a one ounce portion (about 22 peas) is 150 calories, and contains 8 grams of omega-6 rich fat, and 1 gram of saturated fat. The same size serving of fresh peas is only 31 calories. Plus the tasty snack version with added fat and salt can make it hard to stop at a single serving.

The snack aisle is full of choices that on the surface look healthy. You can get chips made from vegetables, sweet potatoes, flax seed, whole grains, and more. Interestingly, they all have a nutrition profile that is similar to potato chips and tortilla chips: around 150 calories per ounce, 6-10 grams of total fat and most have one gram of saturated fat. Fiber varies, but this is a high calorie way to add fiber to your diet.

The same is true of crackers. Out of a whole section promoting whole grains, only a handful truly are. Wheat flour is white flour, and a food can be multigrain or advertise whole grains – and still be mostly white (wheat) flour! Wheat Thins are a good example of a cracker that has long been advertised as a whole grain, yet the first ingredient is wheat flour. A new version is made with 100% whole wheat flour, however it still contains high fructose corn syrup and a long list of additives. Reduced Fat Triscuits are a better choice with few ingredients. Rye Crisps or Ak Mak crackers are even better. Tasty Mary's Gone Crackers are both whole grain and gluten free.

Organic or gluten-free ingredients doesn't change the fact that a food is highly processed. Most gluten-free products are refined. Choose primarily whole foods; baked products are best when made with 100% whole wheat, cracked wheat, sprouted wheat or other whole or sprouted grains.

A group of companies have banded together to market "healthier" products under the label of "Smart Choices." It is a great idea and good that companies want to provide healthier food, except that there is controversy over just what the standards should be. The current program allows Lucky Charms, Froot Loops, Ritz Bits Peanut Butter Chocolate Blast crackers and Kid Cuisine Magical Cheese Stuffed Cheese Pizza to be billed as "Smart Choices." They sound more like bad choices to me.

Pay attention as you make your food choices. Ignore the health claims and read the label. If you are going to buy chips anyway, then yes – choose a product with better ingredients. If you are going to buy cookies anyway and prefer organic or gluten-free ingredients, then yes – let that help you choose which product to buy. Just don't get hooked into buying it *because* of those claims.

Vitamin water: why?

Vitamin water is a popular new food that has healthy sales, but I question how healthy it is for us. It is a value-added form of water, but nothing can beat clean, filtered water.

You pay a premium price for this water with its flavoring and the addition of a few vitamins. It seems like an odd way to get vitamins: I prefer to choose what I take, especially since some can be toxic at higher levels. Vitamin levels add up when you get them from various sources.

A 20 oz bottle of Smart Water has 50 calories per 8 oz, so there are 125 calories in every bottle, enough to make your weight creep up over time if you substitute it for water! Make your own no-calorie flavored water by adding fresh lemon or mint; you'll add one less plastic bottle to the landfill.

Recipes for the Month

[Roasted Spaghetti Sauce](#)
[Grilled Veggie Salad](#)



Click the links to the recipe, or find them on my blog at www.HealthyHabitsCoach.wordpress.com.

Are You Ready for the Food Holidays?

Do you have strategies for dealing with Halloween candy and the Thanksgiving feast? I can help you plan a thoughtful approach that allows you to feel good about your choices without feeling deprived. Call or email me to find out more: 707 431-7524 or kathy@HealthyHabitsCoach.com

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

Are you ready to stop dieting and looking for a way of eating that is sustainable, enjoyable and healthy?

Discover Wellness from the Inside Out!

