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PROTEIN IS MORE BETTER?

BY DAVID SCHARDT

Protein is hot, hot, hot! It's the latest marketing buzzword. From breakfast shakes to breads, cereals, and granola bars, companies are scrambling to market foods that have —or pretend to have— more protein.

But do most people need more protein to preserve or increase muscle as they age? And does extra protein help us manage our weight, satisfy our cravings, and “stay on track,” as some food labels claim?

Or does a high-protein diet increase our risk of bone loss, kidney disease, and cancer?

Here's what we know so far.

Continued on page 3.



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PROTEIN

IS MORE BETTER?

How much protein should we eat? That's not an easy question to answer. Here's the latest from the frontlines of research.

Adults need 0.36 grams of protein per pound of body weight. That's the Recommended Dietary Allowance, or RDA, which is set by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). It works out to about 45 grams a day for someone who weighs 125 pounds and 70 grams for someone who weighs 195 pounds.

But some researchers are asking whether the RDA is enough for older adults.

GOODBYE, MUSCLE

We lose about 1 percent of our muscle each year after around age thirty. Researchers call it sarcopenia.

"We see this loss in most adults as they get older," notes Denise Houston, of the Sticht Center on Aging at the Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. "Some people maintain muscle a little better than others, but the decline in muscle mass with age is pretty much inevitable."

Adequate muscle is about more than looking buff. It's critical for getting up out of a chair or car, for example, or for walking up stairs or carrying groceries or a child.

And it's not just thin older people who are at risk. "Many overweight or obese people also have sarcopenia," says Houston. "It's not visible because of their body fat, but it's just as debilitating."

However, the Institute of Medicine didn't consider how the protein we eat affects our muscles, strength, or ability to perform everyday tasks when it set the Recommended Dietary Allowances.

"The protein standard is based on studies done primarily in younger adults," explains Houston. And the studies, some of which were done more than 50 years ago, only measured how much protein you'd have to eat to balance the protein your body loses (in excreted cells, enzymes, skin, etc.) every day.

"The RDA for protein may be only a minimum for older adults," says Houston. "We need to know more about what the optimal protein intake is, especially because of the loss of muscle and physical function with age."

(Some of Houston's research has been funded by the egg industry, as well as by the National Institutes of Health, or NIH.)

Two medical organizations—the International Osteoporosis Foundation and the European Society for Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism—convened international panels of experts during the past year to review the scientific evidence for the pro-



Researchers aren't sure if eating extra protein can slow the muscle loss that starts around age 30.

tein requirements of older adults.^{1,2}

"There's been a lot of research on protein intake and its effects on muscle synthesis and muscle function that has generated this interest," says Nicolaas Deutz, who heads the Center for Translational Research in Aging & Longevity at Texas A&M University. Deutz chaired one of the panels. (Some of Deutz's research has been funded by the dairy industry and Nestlé, as well as by NIH.)

The two panels arrived at similar

conclusions: To preserve muscle and stay healthy longer, older adults should eat not 0.36 grams of protein per pound, but 0.45 to 0.54 grams. ("Older" typically means age 60 and above.)

How good is the evidence to support that advice?

OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES

Some studies have observed a link between protein and muscle loss, but others haven't. For example:

■ **The Health, Aging, and Body Composition Study** followed 2,732 men and women in Pittsburgh and Memphis for three years.³

"These were well-functioning, community-dwelling individuals in their 70s," says Houston, who co-authored the study. "All of them lost muscle during the study, but those who were consuming the most protein lost 40 percent less muscle than those who were consuming the least."

The "most protein" group averaged 0.54 grams per pound of body weight (which translated into 91 grams of protein a day). The "least protein" group averaged 0.36 grams per pound (57 grams a day).

■ **The Women's Health Initiative Observational Study (WHI-OS)** followed about 24,000 women aged 65 years or older for three years.⁴

"We found a strong association between a higher protein intake and a lower risk of frailty," says lead author Jeannette Beasley, of Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Yeshiva University.

Women consuming 0.54 grams of protein per pound of body weight every day were 32 percent less likely to become frail than women consuming 0.45 grams



per pound.

“Frailty is a composite of muscle strength and mobility,” explains Beasley. Women in the study were considered frail if they suffered from some combination of exhaustion, poor physical function, little physical activity, and unintentional weight loss.

A further analysis of the WHI-OS, which tracked nearly 135,000 women aged 50 to 79 for seven years, showed similar results.⁵

The researchers also gave roughly 5,000 of the women tests that measured their grip strength, how fast they could walk, and how many times they could get up and sit back down in 15 seconds. The women who ate more protein did better on grip strength and standing, but not walking.

“We found that protein intake was more closely related to muscle strength than mobility,” notes Beasley.

■ Unlike the other studies, the **Osteoporotic Fractures in Men Study** of nearly 6,000 men 65 and older found that those who became frail over a five-year period consumed as much protein as those who stayed healthy.⁶

But the WHI studies were the largest, and may be the most accurate, because they analyzed urine from some of the women to estimate how much protein they ate.

Still, no observational study can prove cause and effect. No matter how hard researchers try to take other factors (like smoking, exercise, or illness) into account, something else about people who eat more protein could explain their muscle strength.

That’s why investigators feed people protein to see if it affects their muscles.

MUSCLE BUILDING

“We’re constantly making and breaking down muscle,” explains physiologist Jared Dickinson, of Arizona State University. “Between meals we have a higher rate of

breakdown, and then after meals a higher rate of synthesis.”

But “older adults may not make enough muscle after meals to fully overcome the breakdown in muscle they experience between meals,” adds Dickinson. “So, over the course of a day, a month, a year, older people may experience a net loss of muscle.” (Some of Dickinson’s research has been funded by General Mills and by a soy protein manufacturer, as well as by NIH.)

meat, chicken, or fish, or six ounces of greek yogurt.)

But with more than 15 grams, the difference between older and younger seemed to disappear. For example, Dutch researchers found that 12 older men incorporated just as much protein into muscle as 12 younger men within six hours after they were all given 20 grams of protein.⁸ And U.S. researchers found the same after they gave six younger and seven older people 30 grams of protein.⁹

“Those studies only measured synthesis, not breakdown, so we don’t know what the net impact on protein balance is over time,” cautions researcher Wayne Campbell, a professor of nutrition science at Purdue University. (Some of Campbell’s research has been funded by the beef, pork, dairy, and egg industries, as well as by NIH.)

How much protein you get at each meal may also matter. For one week, researchers fed eight people aged 25 to 55 a diet that contained 90 grams of protein a day: a low-protein breakfast (11 grams), a low-protein lunch (16 grams), and a protein-heavy dinner (63 grams). During another week, the same people were fed roughly 30 grams of protein at each meal.¹⁰

“Total muscle protein synthesis was about 25 percent greater when the participants ate meals that had evenly distributed protein,” says co-author Doug Paddon-

Jones, a physiologist at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston. (Some of Paddon-Jones’ research has been funded by the beef and dairy industries, as well as by NIH.)

“It’s a very small initial study,” he cautions, “and we didn’t have anyone older than 55 participating in it.”

What’s more, in an earlier study by Paddon-Jones, people made no more muscle protein after eating 90 grams of protein than after eating 30 grams.¹¹ That may explain why people who got 30 grams of protein at each meal made more muscle than those who got just

MAKING MUSCLE



Strength training builds muscle. Does extra protein also help? It’s not clear.

that work all the major muscle groups: legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms. And the exercises should be done to the point where it’s hard to do more without help.

If you don’t work out, start with your local Y, community center, or sports club. The CDC offers videos and written materials (cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/guidelines) on how to work out at home. For a free download of simple exercises to get you started, go to NutritionAction.com/ExerciseReport.

Nothing beats strength training, or resistance exercises, for building and preserving muscle.

That’s why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all adults do strength training at least twice a week.

That should include 8 to 12 repetitions of exercises

Can eating more protein help prevent muscle loss? It’s not clear.

Short-term Studies

The evidence that older people make less muscle after meals than younger people comes mostly from small studies that lasted just a few hours.

For example, when 11 older adults got the amino acids in 15 grams of protein, they incorporated less of them into muscle—at least over the next 3½ hours—than did eight younger adults.⁷ (You’d get 15 grams of protein in two ounces of

THE PROTEIN COUNTER

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for protein is 0.36 grams for each pound you weigh. To play it safe, shoot for 0.5 grams per pound. To make it simple, divide your weight in half. That's your protein target in grams. So if you weigh 150 pounds, shoot for 75 grams of protein a day.

	Calories	Protein ^(g)
Chicken or turkey breast, skinless (4 oz. cooked) ¹	170	34
Beef or pork (4 oz. cooked) ¹	300	30
Salmon (4 oz. cooked) ¹	200	28
Shrimp (4 oz. cooked)	140	26
Tempeh (4 oz.)	220	21
Greek yogurt, plain, 0% (6 oz.)	100	17
Morningstar Farms Grillers Prime (1)	170	17
Cottage cheese, 1% (½ cup)	80	14
Starbucks Nonfat Caffè Latte (grande, 16 fl. oz.)	130	13
Canned tuna, light, in water (2 oz. drained)	50	11
Tofu, extra-firm (4 oz.)	110	11
Sliced deli turkey breast (2 oz.)	60	10
Soy nuts (¼ cup)	110	9
Milk, fat-free (1 cup)	80	8
Yogurt, plain, nonfat (6 oz.)	80	8
Edamame, shelled (½ cup cooked)	100	8
Silk Original Soymilk (1 cup)	110	8
Beans (½ cup cooked) ¹	120	8
Quinoa (1 cup cooked)	220	8
Spaghetti (1 cup cooked)	220	8
Cheddar or swiss cheese (1 oz.) ¹	110	7
Almond or peanut butter (2 Tbs.) ¹	190	7
Egg, large (1)	70	6
Brie or goat cheese (1 oz.) ¹	90	6
Nuts (¼ cup) ¹	170	6
Whole wheat bread (1 slice, 1.5 oz.)	100	5
Gardenburger Original (1)	110	5
Campbell's Condensed Chicken Noodle Soup (1 cup prepared)	60	3
Hummus (2 Tbs.)	70	2
Cream cheese (1 oz.)	100	2
Ice cream or frozen yogurt (½ cup) ¹	120	2
Silk Original almond milk or coconut milk (1 cup) ¹	70	1

¹Average.

Source: USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference and company information.

11 grams at breakfast (less than 30), 16 grams at lunch (less than 30), and 63 grams at supper (no better than 30).

“Evenly distributing sufficient protein throughout the day is an intriguing concept,” says Campbell. “But we don’t know yet how significant it is and whether a short-term effect leads to actual changes in muscle or physical function or anything else related to people’s well-being.”

And in long-term studies, it’s not clear that getting extra protein for months preserves muscle.

Long-term Studies

When Campbell fed 10 people aged 54 to 78 the RDA for protein—0.36 grams per pound of body weight—for 12 weeks, they lost thigh muscle.¹² But so far, few studies have tested whether more protein than the RDA (without exercise) prevents muscle loss or builds muscle.

And some results aren’t easy to interpret. For example, researchers gave 65 frail elderly people (average age: 80) an extra 15 grams of protein or a placebo at breakfast and again at lunch every day. After six months, the protein eaters had no greater muscle mass or strength, but they did have a better “physical performance” score. (They could stand up more quickly and lift more with their legs.)¹³

What is clear: the best way to build muscle is to do strength training (see “Making Muscle”).

“The science is pretty sound that strength training definitely works more robustly than the effects of protein,” says Campbell. In fact, in many studies, extra protein plus strength training built no more muscle than strength training alone.

For example, when Campbell had 220 overweight or obese middle-aged men and women do nine months of strength training twice a week and aerobic exercise once a week, they gained strength

and lean muscle. But those who also were given 20, 40, or 60 grams of whey protein every day were no stronger and gained no more muscle than those who took a placebo.¹⁴

Similarly, when other researchers had 80 adults aged 70 to 85 do strength training and take either a placebo or

whey protein (40 grams a day) for six months, the whey made no difference in muscle strength or size.¹⁵

However, a Dutch study got mixed results. After six months of strength training, frail elderly people gained leg strength and were able to get up out of a chair faster than when they entered the study. But those who were given an extra 15 grams of protein at breakfast and lunch during the six months did no better than those who got a placebo. The group that got extra protein did gain more muscle mass, however.¹⁶

Campbell’s bottom line: “It’s wonderful marketing for companies that would like to sell high-protein breakfasts and lunches and the like, but the science on whether or not protein actually has an impact on a person’s body composition or skeletal muscle, size, strength, function—we’re still doing the research.”

Until the evidence becomes clear, how much protein should you eat?

“Make sure you don’t slide below the amount of protein that the average older person consumes,” says Campbell. “That’s what the two expert panels concluded.”

That means shooting for 0.5 grams of protein for every pound you weigh. (See “The Protein Counter.”)

“If you’re trying to lose weight by eating fewer calories,” adds Campbell, “make sure you’re cutting carbohydrates and fats, not protein.”

Others suggest that if you’re older and have trouble eating enough protein—and enough

food—try a protein drink.

“As we age, our appetite and satiety cues are blunted,” explains Heather Leidy, a nutritional physiologist at the University of Missouri. “When you drink protein in a shake or smoothie, you don’t get the same feeling of satiety or fullness that you would if you ate your



IS PROTEIN HARMFUL?

CANCER

"Animal protein is the most significant carcinogen we consume," T. Colin Campbell, professor emeritus of nutritional biochemistry at Cornell University, said in a 2005 speech. He bases that claim mostly on a series of animal studies he conducted in the 1980s and 1990s.

But the evidence in humans is weak. In fact, Campbell's own study of 6,500 adults living in China in 1983 saw none.¹

"The China Study found essentially no significant correlation between the consumption of animal protein and the risk of cancer, despite looking at lots of different cancers," says Walter Willett, chair of the department of nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health.

"The China Study is interesting as a description of what people were eating during that time," says Willett. "But it's only a simple correlational study that's not very informative for learning about risk factors or causes of disease."

In 2007, all of the scientific evidence on a possible link between protein and cancer in humans was reviewed by an international panel of experts.²

"They just did not see much of a relationship," notes Willett, who adds that he does agree with Campbell on one point: "In general, we would be better off consuming more plant proteins and fewer animal proteins."

But it's the food, not the protein, that matters. "When you look at the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer, eating red meat looks bad, while poultry, for example, looks pretty good."

WEAK BONES

"For a long time, researchers believed that higher-protein diets, especially those that are high in animal protein, were detrimental to bones because they led to calcium loss in the urine," says University of Connecticut bone researcher Jessica Bihuniak.

"We now believe this is not what's happening, at least in the short term."

In recent short-term studies, protein increased both the amount of calcium excreted in the urine *and* the amount absorbed from food.^{3,4} So it didn't result in a net loss of calcium.

What's more, adds Bihuniak, "there appears to be no increase in markers of bone loss when you increase dietary protein, at least in the short term."

In fact, two recent large studies found that people who ate more protein had higher bone mass and lower rates of fractures than those who ate less protein.⁵

(Some of Behuniak's research has been funded by the dairy industry, as well as by NIH.)

KIDNEYS

"Individuals who consume very large amounts of protein, particularly animal protein, risk permanent loss of kidney function," warns the website forksoverknives.com.

But the best studies don't back that up.

"In our studies of more than 5,500 people who didn't have kidney disease, higher protein intakes were not associated with impaired kidney function," says Albert Einstein College of Medicine's Jeannette Beasley.

For example, the Cardiovascular Health Study tracked more than 3,600 adults aged 65 and older for an average of six years. During that time, 27 percent of the participants suffered a rapid decline in kidney function. But the decline wasn't linked to how much protein they ate or whether it was animal or plant protein.⁶

It's a different situation for people with kidney disease, diabetes, or other chronic conditions, who may be told to eat less protein to relieve some of the strain on their kidneys from filtering the byproducts of protein metabolism, notes Beasley.

¹ thechinastudy.com.

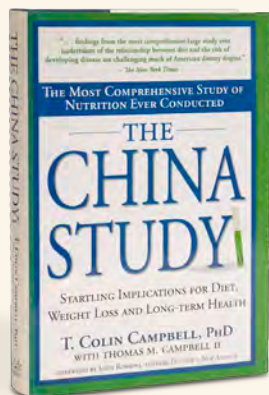
² aicr.org/research/research_science_expert_report.html.

³ *J. Nutr.* 141: 391, 2011.

⁴ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 68: 859, 1998.

⁵ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 90: 1674, 2009.

⁶ *Nutrition* 30: 794, 2014.



The China Study found no link between animal protein and cancer risk.

protein as a solid food. So that's an excellent strategy for folks who need to get a certain amount of protein without reaching a level of fullness that stops them from eating throughout the day."¹⁷

(Some of Leidy's research has been funded by the beef, pork, egg, and dairy industries, General Mills, and a soy protein manufacturer, as well as by NIH.)

WEIGHT LOSS

"Protein helps you stay on track," say the Special K granola bar boxes. "Special K cereal, shakes, meal bars, and snacks have a winning combination of protein and fiber you need to help you outsmart hunger."

"Protein: Your Secret Weight-Loss Weapon," proclaimed the headline in *Women's Health* magazine in 2010. "The moment it leaves your fork, protein starts winnowing your waistline."

Really?

"Dietary protein does have a modest impact on satiety in some studies, but not in others," says Campbell.^{18,19}

What's more, feeling less hungry or more full may not mean you eat less. "The majority of studies don't show any impact of satiety on how much people consume at a later meal," notes Leidy.

When it comes to weight loss, it's the calories—not the amount of carbohydrate, fat, or protein—that count.

For example, 18 of 23 weight-loss trials that lasted an average of 12 weeks found no greater weight loss with higher-protein diets than with lower-protein diets. When a meta-analysis combined the results of all 23 trials (on a total of 1,063 people), those on the higher-protein diets lost only an extra 1.7 pounds.²⁰

In the most ambitious

attempt so far to see if protein is a “secret weight-loss weapon,” the Pounds Lost study advised 811 overweight or obese U.S. men and women to eat 750 fewer calories a day. Half were told to get 15 percent of their calories from protein; the other half 25 percent. (The trial also tested different levels of carbohydrate and fat.)

After two years, the higher-protein group had lost no more weight than the lower-protein group. By that time, though, both groups had drifted back to getting about 20 percent of their calories from protein.²¹

However, extra protein may still help dieters: “A higher-protein diet does have a more consistent effect on preserving lean body mass during weight loss,” says Campbell.

In a meta-analysis of 11 studies that lasted at least 12 weeks, dieters on higher-protein diets lost 1.3 fewer pounds of lean tissue than dieters who ate less protein.²⁰

“If you eat a higher proportion of your calories as protein while you’re losing weight, you’ll lose less lean tissue,” says Campbell. 🍌

¹ *Osteoporos. Int.* 24: 1555, 2013.

² *Clin. Nutr. pii:* S0261, 2014.

³ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 87: 150, 2008.

⁴ *J. Am. Geriatr. Soc.* 58: 1063, 2010.

⁵ *J. Am. Geriatr. Soc.* 61: 1863, 2013.

⁶ *J. Gerontol. A Biol. Sci. Med. Sci.* 69: 695, 2014.

⁷ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 82: 1065, 2005.

⁸ *Am. J. Clin. Nutr.* 93: 322, 2011.

⁹ *Am. J. Physiol. Endocrinol. Metab.* 286: E321, 2004.

¹⁰ *J. Nutr.* 144: 876, 2014.

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PROTEIN POINTERS

“Protein” claims can trip you up. Here are a few pointers.



How much? Special K Protein 110-calorie bars have just 4 grams of protein, less than the 5 grams required to make a “good source of

protein” claim. You get more in protein bars from Fiber One (6 grams), Cascadian Farm (9 grams), and Nature Valley (10 grams), but the calorie cost is higher with Nature Valley (190) and Cascadian (250) than with Fiber One (140).

TIP: Always check protein *and* calories.



Why shake? “V8 Protein blends milk, soy, quinoa, brown rice and pea proteins with rich cocoa and real honey to give you satisfyingly delicious energy,” promises

V8’s 200-calorie Chocolate Protein Shake. It’s got more sugar than honey (or anything except water and sweet potato and carrot juice), more artificial flavor than pea protein or brown rice, and more salt than quinoa flour.

TIP: Solid foods delay hunger longer than liquids.



More sugar? Without milk, a serving (1¼ cups) of Cheerios Protein has 7 grams of protein, 220 calories, and 4 teaspoons of added sugar. But 220 calories

(2¼ cups) of Original Cheerios has the same 7 grams of protein...and less than 1 teaspoon of sugar.

TIP: Don’t be fooled by protein claims that include the protein in the milk you add.



5 times more? “5X Protein!” boasts the So Delicious Almond Plus almond milk carton. That’s because a cup of most almond milks has just 1 gram of protein. (So Delicious adds 4 grams of pea and rice protein.)

TIP: Cow’s milk and most regular non-flavored soy milks have 8 grams of protein per cup.



Protein plus...sugar? “30g protein,” crows Bolthouse Farms Chocolate Protein Plus. That’s for an entire 400-calorie bottle, not the 210-calorie serving (1 cup) on the Nutrition Facts label. Protein Plus is mostly milk, water, agave nectar (which is 82% fructose), sugar, and whey and soy protein.

TIP: You’d get 16 grams of protein (the amount in a cup of Bolthouse) from just 100 calories of nonfat plain greek yogurt...without the sugar.



Portable protein?

Each 170-calorie Oscar Mayer P3 Portable Protein Pack—small portions of cheese, almonds or peanuts, and chicken, ham, or turkey—has about 14 grams of protein (good), but each also has nitrites (from celery juice) and about 450 milligrams of sodium (not good).

TIP: Why not pack your own cheese, nuts, and last night’s turkey or chicken in a reusable container?

BOTTOM LINE

■ The only sure way to build muscle or slow muscle loss as you age is to do strength training.

■ Shoot for a daily amount of protein in grams that’s equal to half your weight in pounds.

■ Don’t worry about protein causing cancer, bone loss, or kidney disease.

Worse Than You Thought?

BY BONNIE LIEBMAN & JAYNE HURLEY

Odds are, you don't think of these foods as healthy. But they're worse than you may imagine.

The information for this article was compiled by Paige Einstein and Lindsay Moyer.

Pancakes

It's like having dessert for breakfast.

At IHOP, an order of five Original Buttermilk pancakes adds 750 calories' worth of (mostly) white flour to your IHOPs. And that's without the syrup you pour at the table.



But these days, plain pancakes are passé. Expect 650 to 800 calories in a four-stack of Chocolate Chocolate Chip, Double Blueberry, Harvest Grain 'N Nut, Jelly Donut, Rooty Tooty Fresh 'N Fruity, or Strawberry Banana.

IHOP's New York Cheesecake pancakes take the cake. A four-stack has 1,100 calories and roughly 13 teaspoons of (mostly added) sugar. That's two days' worth for women and a 1½-day supply for men.

It's not just IHOP. An order of Bob Evans Sweet & Stacked Hotcakes—Apple Cinnamon, Cinnamon Supreme, Double Blueberry, Double Chocolate, or Fruit-N-Nut Multigrain—ranges from 1,000 to 1,200 calories. Think of them as heavycakes.

Instead: Try a veggie omelet made with egg whites or egg substitute.

Deep Dish Pizza

Don't get us wrong. Pizza with a hand-tossed or thin crust is no diet food. At BJ's Restaurant and Brewhouse, California Pizza Kitchen, or Uno Pizzeria & Grill, for example, you're looking at roughly 1,000 to 1,500 calories in a single-serve pie.



But if you order an Uno individual or BJ's small *deep dish* pizza, you can count on 1,500 to 2,000 calories. Bonus: most come with 1 to 1½ days' worth of saturated fat (20 to 30 grams) and at least a two-day supply of sodium (3,000 milligrams). And deep dish means a deep pile of white flour...to go with your brand new deep belly fat.

Instead: Eat no more than half of an individual thin crust pizza topped with veggies.

Paninis



A panini is a sandwich that's typically grilled from the top and bottom in (what else?) a panini press.

At Panera and Corner Bakery, they range from roughly 650 to 850 calories. Only about half of the non-panini

sandwiches at those chains climb that high.

It's not clear what makes the panini a gut buster: larger size? more bread? extra toppings? Panera's paninis—Chipotle Chicken, Frontega Chicken, Smokehouse Turkey, and Tomato & Mozzarella—certainly don't *seem* excessive. But they might if you knew that a Big Mac had 530 calories.

Instead: Check the calories (if the menu lists them) before you order any sandwich, panini, flatbread, or wrap. Odds are, you're better off with just half (plus salad).

Frosting



No one thinks that frosting—or the cake it decorates—is a health food.

But few people see frosting for what it is: essentially a mix of sugar and butter (if you make it at home) or sugar

and palm oil (Betty Crocker Rich & Creamy or Hershey's) or, worse yet, sugar and partially hydrogenated oil (Betty Crocker Whipped, any Duncan Hines or Pillsbury). Yes, some frostings still harbor heart-threatening trans fats that have disappeared from most other foods.

Each serving (two *level* tablespoons) of regular frosting has around 140 calories, 5 teaspoons of sugar, and either 2½ grams of saturated fat (if made with palm oil) or 1½ grams each of saturated and trans fat (if made with partially hydrogenated oil).

But 2 tablespoons may be just the start. Expect 2 to 3 tablespoons in a cupcake from a bakery like Sprinkles, and 5 to 6 in a slice of Carrot Cake or Linda's Fudge Cake from The Cheesecake Factory. Six tablespoons of most frostings would add 420 calories and 15 teaspoons of sugar, plus 7½ to 9 grams of bad fat (sat and/or trans) to your cake. Mayday!

Instead: Try Reddi-Wip Original or Chocolate Dairy Whipped Topping (just 15 calories, half a gram of sat fat, and less than 1 gram of sugar in two tablespoons).

Burritos

It doesn't much matter what kind of burrito you get. You start with a 300-calorie (mostly white flour) tortilla and pick beef, steak, pork, chicken, or tofu (each around 150 to 200 calories), then add rice, beans, cheese, sour cream, and/or guacamole (100 to 200 calories *each*). Good luck taking home fewer than 1,000 calories.

That's Chipotle, but Qdoba is Comparable. Ditto for sit-down restaurants like On The Border (except they add 300 to 500 calories' worth of beans and rice on the side).

Instead: Get chicken or tofu ("Sofritas" at Chipotle) plus beans and salsa on a salad (best bet) or over brown rice.



Dipped Ice Cream & Cones

Ice cream is bad enough. A half-cup ("kiddie" or small) scoop at Häagen-Dazs or Ben & Jerry's, for example, has around 250 to 300 calories (mostly from saturated fat and sugar). But companies

keep adding candy, cookies, batter, and whatever else it takes to get our attention. Among the worst: chocolate dip.

An *empty* Cold Stone Creamery chocolate dipped waffle cone or bowl has 310 calories and 7 grams of sat fat (a third of a day's worth). At Dairy Queen, getting a chocolate-dipped large vanilla soft serve bumps the calories from 470 to 660 and the sat fat from 9 grams to 24. (At many places, the "chocolate" coating is mostly coconut oil.)

Chocolate coating also makes Dove, Häagen-Dazs, and Magnum bars more memorable. Their calories (250 to 350) and sat fat (10 to 15 grams) may stick around for years.

Instead: Stick to one uncoated, unadorned kiddie-size scoop in a cup, cake cone (20 calories), or sugar cone (50 calories).

Pad Thai



It's not clear why Pad Thai is so popular. Something about tofu, shrimp, bean sprouts, egg, crushed peanuts, and rice noodles—or maybe Thai food in general—may sound harmless.

Pad Thai adds roughly 1,000 to 1,500 calories' worth of padding to your waist and around 4,000 milligrams (2½ days' worth) of sodium to your blood pressure. At restaurants like P.F. Chang's, the Pad Thai has about as many calories as the fried rice with beef. Warning: Lo mein is in the same ballpark.

Instead: Order stir-fried veggies with shrimp, chicken, or tofu. And eat just half the rice (brown, if you can get it).

Loaded Pasta

Mac & cheese is everywhere, but it's not alone.

Panera offers a selection of pastas like Pesto Sacchettini and Tortellini Alfredo. A full serving averages around 800 calories. (The Mac & Cheese's 980 still holds the record, though.) Your bowl of white flour, cheese, oil, and maybe cream delivers 10 to 26 grams of saturated fat and 1,300 to 2,900 milligrams of sodium. Mmm.

A full serving of *any* pasta at Noodles & Company averages about 800 calories, and at Corner Bakery about 900.

Instead: Skip the pasta. If nothing else will do, order a small (at Noodles & Company) or a half order (as part of a You Pick 2 at Panera or a Corner Combo at Corner Bakery) plus a salad. Skip the bread on the side.



A few others...

■ **Agave.** Some people who would cross the street to avoid high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS) buy agave instead. Yet agave syrup is 82 percent fructose; HFCS is usually 55 percent fructose. Go figure.

■ **Butter.** Have you gone back to butter because you're afraid that margarine has trans fat...or because you've heard advice based on a flawed meta-analysis? (See May 2014 and June 2014 cover stories.)

In fact, plenty of tubs—like Country Crock, Earth Balance, I Can't Believe It's Not Butter!, Olivio, Promise, and Smart Balance—are made without partially hydrogenated oil, so they're trans-free. They're mostly soybean or canola oil plus enough palm or palm kernel oil to solidify them (and to give them about 2 grams of saturated fat per tablespoon).

Some companies—like Country Crock, Earth Balance, and I Can't Believe It's Not Butter!—even sell *sticks* with zero trans. They need more palm or palm kernel oil to make them more solid, so the sat fat rises to 2½ to 4 grams.

In contrast, a tablespoon of butter has 7 grams of sat fat *plus* half a gram of trans.

■ **Yogurt coating.** Even at some Whole Foods you can find bins of yogurt pretzels, yogurt malt balls, and yogurt almonds. Tip: *real* yogurt can't coat anything. Assume that the "yogurt" in coated foods is like the "yogurt" in candies like Ocean Spray Craisins Greek Yogurt Dried Cranberries—mostly sugar and palm kernel oil. It's a 30-year-old scam that still has legs. 🍌



Sweet Confusion



Saccharin, which is largely used as a tabletop sweetener, may lead to high blood sugar levels.

Saccharin may lead to high blood sugar levels by changing gut bacteria in some people, but other artificial sweeteners may not have the same effect.

Israeli researchers allowed mice access to one of six liquids: water sweetened with saccharin, sucralose, aspartame, glucose, sucrose, or nothing.

After 11 weeks, the authors reported that, as a group, the mice drinking the three artificial sweeteners had worse glucose tolerance—that is, their blood sugar rose higher after they were given a very sugary drink—than the other mice. (However, the mice fed aspartame appeared to have little or no glucose intolerance, and saccharin and sucralose affected only some “responders.”)

Glucose tolerance was normal in all mice after the researchers gave them antibiotics, suggesting that saccharin and sucralose had altered the gut bacteria of some mice.

For all other experiments, the researchers used only saccharin. When they transferred gut bacteria that had been mixed with saccharin (in a test tube) to germ-free mice, the animals’ glucose tolerance got worse. When they gave seven people a high dose of saccharin for a week, four “responders” had worse glucose tolerance at the end than at the beginning of the week. And when they transferred stool from the human responders to germ-free mice, the animals’ glucose tolerance got worse.

What to do: It’s too early to draw any conclusions from this study, but you’re better off drinking water. And don’t switch from diet drinks to sugary beverages. The best human studies find that sugary drinks cause weight gain and are linked to a higher risk of diabetes, while diet sodas (typically sweetened with aspartame) are not. (Some studies find a link between diet soda and obesity or diabetes only because those conditions lead people to switch to diet soda, not because diet soda *causes* those conditions.)

Nature 2014. doi:10.1038/nature137934.

More Potassium, Less Stroke

For years, researchers have known that getting enough potassium may lower your blood pressure. A new study suggests that potassium may prevent a stroke in people who don’t have high blood pressure.

Researchers tracked more than 90,000 women who were 50 to 79 when they entered the Women’s Health Initiative.

After 11 years, those who typically ate at least 3,200 milligrams of potassium a day from food had a 12 percent lower risk of having a stroke than those who ate less than about 1,900 mg a day.

What’s more, eating more potassium was linked to a 21 percent lower risk of stroke in women who didn’t have high blood pressure.

What to do: Eat more potassium-rich foods like vegetables, fruit, seafood, beans, yogurt, and milk. This type of study can’t tell whether something else about women who eat more potassium might explain their lower risk of stroke. However, it’s clear from randomized clinical trials that potassium lowers blood pressure.

Stroke 45: 2874, 2014.

Hear, Hear

Seafood may lower the risk of hearing loss, possibly because it helps preserve blood flow to the inner ear.

Researchers followed more than 65,000 women in the Nurses’ Health Study II for 18 years. Those who reported consuming fish at least twice a week had a 20 percent lower risk of self-reported hearing loss than those who ate fish less than once a month.

All types of seafood—including tuna, light-meat or dark-meat fish, and shellfish—were linked to less hearing loss. So were EPA and DHA, the long-chain omega-3 fats found in fish, but not ALA, the shorter-chain omega-3 found in flax, canola, and soybean oil.

What to do: This kind of study can’t prove that seafood protects hearing. Something else about fish eaters may lower their risk of hearing loss (though the authors took many factors—like smoking, alcohol, weight, blood pressure, diabetes, and exercise—into account). In any case, it’s worth shooting for two servings of fish a week to lower your risk of heart attack and stroke.

Am. J. Clin. Nutr. 2014. doi:10.3945/ajcn.114.091819.

The Low-Cal Cookie Trap

Some people end up eating more calories if a food is labeled “low-calorie.”

Scientists offered 188 young women the same oatmeal-chocolate chip cookies. The labels listed either 130 or 260 calories per cookie, and they had a brand name that was either considered more healthful (Kashi) or less healthful (Nabisco).

The women ate more cookies when they were labeled as Kashi than when they were labeled as Nabisco. What’s more, the women ate more when the cookies were labeled as having 130 calories each than when they were labeled as having 260 calories each.

What to do: Be wary of labels that might give you license to overeat.



Appetite 2014. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2014.06.100.



Falling for Veggies

BY KATE SHERWOOD

It's a little-known fact: As the leaves start to fall, your vegetable prospects start to rise. Sweet and earthy root vegetables, lush greens, succulent winter squash. These three recipes turn autumn's bounty into yours. 🍂

Got a question or suggestion? Write to Kate at healthycook@cspinet.org.

Sautéed Greens & Chickpeas

- 2 lbs. mixed baby cooking greens (kale, chard, spinach)
 - ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
 - 8 cloves garlic, sliced
 - ¼ tsp. red pepper flakes
 - ¼ cup sun-dried tomatoes, finely chopped
 - 1 15 oz. can no-salt-added chickpeas, not drained
 - 2 Tbs. red wine vinegar
 - ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper

Steam the cooking greens until tender, 2-3 minutes. Run them under cold water, then roughly chop. • In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium-low heat. Sauté the garlic until lightly golden, 1-2 minutes. Stir in the pepper flakes, sun-dried tomatoes, chickpeas with their liquid, and the cooking greens. Heat through. • Remove from the heat, stir in the vinegar, and season with up to ¼ tsp. of salt and pepper to taste.

Serves: 8 Total Time: 20 minutes 🕒

Per serving: calories 180 | total fat 9 g
sat fat 1 g | sodium 170 mg | carbs 20 g
fiber 5 g | protein 7 g

Braised Root Veggies & Fall Fruits

- 1 Tbs. butter
 - 3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
 - 1 small onion, thinly sliced
 - 4 small carrots, sliced
 - 8 radishes, halved
 - 1 lb. turnips, peeled and chopped
 - 1 lb. napa or savoy cabbage, cored and chopped (about 8 cups)
 - 2 apples, peeled, cored, and chopped
 - 2 pears, peeled, cored, and chopped
 - ¼ tsp. kosher salt
- freshly ground black pepper

In a large, heavy pot, melt the butter in the oil over high heat. Stir in the onion, carrots, radishes, and turnips. Cook, stirring, until the vegetables are lightly browned in spots, 5-7 minutes. Add the cabbage, apples, pears, and ½ cup of water. • Cover tightly and reduce the heat to low. Cook until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. • Remove the cover and increase the heat to high. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid cooks off and the vegetables start to brown, 3-5 minutes. • Season with up to ¼ tsp. of salt and pepper to taste.

Serves: 8 Total Time: 40 minutes 🕒

Per serving: calories 140 | total fat 7 g
sat fat 1.5 g | sodium 130 mg | carbs 21 g
fiber 5 g | protein 2 g

Stewed Butternut Squash & Spinach

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 onion, diced
- ¼ cup golden raisins, minced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- ¼ tsp. garam masala
- ¼ tsp. black pepper
- 1 15 oz. can no-salt-added diced tomatoes
- 4 cups ½-inch cubes butternut squash
- 1 lb. baby spinach
- ½ tsp. kosher salt

In a large, heavy skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Cook the onion until it starts to brown, about 5 minutes. Stir in the raisins, garlic, garam masala, and pepper. Add the tomato and simmer until thickened, 5-7 minutes. Add the butternut squash and 1 cup of water. Simmer until the squash is tender, about 20 minutes. Stir in the spinach. • Season with up to ½ tsp. of salt.

Serves: 8 Total Time: 35 minutes 🕒

Per serving: calories 140 | total fat 7 g
sat fat 1 g | sodium 180 mg | carbs 18 g
fiber 4 g | protein 3 g



Cereality Check

What matters in the cereal aisle

BY JAYNE HURLEY & BONNIE LIEBMAN



Cereals are under siege. They're competing with greek yogurt, breakfast bars, breakfast shakes, and smoothies in the supermarket (not to mention toast, bagels, and last night's leftovers at home). And they're up against oatmeal, yogurt parfaits, breakfast sandwiches, and pastries at Starbucks, McDonald's, and convenience stores.

Maybe that's why a cereal box will say almost anything—whether it's about whole grains, protein, fiber, weight loss, cholesterol, blood pressure, or energy—to get your attention. Here's what matters.

The information for this article was compiled by Lindsay Moyer.

1 Go for whole grains. Look for "100% Whole Grain" on the package. Don't rely on claims like "made with whole grain" or "whole grain first ingredient."

Exception: bran isn't a whole grain, yet the bran (outer layer) of the grain is the part that's richest in the intact, unprocessed fiber that may lower your risk of heart disease and diabetes. That's why we counted bran as a whole grain for our Best Bites.

We also gave Best Bites to cereals if the first *two* grain ingredients were whole grains or bran. (And we didn't penalize cereals if they had just a little refined grain.)

2 Check the calories in your serving.

When you scan the Nutrition Facts label for calories, always check the serving size. With cereal, a serving could be anywhere from ¼ cup to 1¼ cups. That's because lighter cereals use a 1 oz. (30-gram) serving, while heavier cereals use 2 oz. (55 grams).

Most lighter cereals range from 100 calories per cup (think Cheerios or corn flakes) to about 150 calories (Honey Nut Cheerios or Special K Protein). Most heavier cereals (like raisin bran or shredded wheat) hover around 200 calories.

But watch out: granolas, mueslis, and some other heavy cereals like Post Grape-Nuts can hit 350 to 600 calories per cup. Granted, you may eat less than that, but how much less? Check for yourself.

To make matters worse, some brands—like Bear Naked and Nature's Path Organic—cheat by using a 1 oz. (¼-cup) serving

on granolas that come in a resealable bag. Their excuse: 1 oz. is the serving for a snack. How convenient. We doubled their servings to a half cup in our chart.

3 Get good fiber. Our Best Bites have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving (lighter cereals) or at least 6 grams (heavier cereals).

The catch: the evidence that fiber helps prevent heart disease and diabetes comes from studies of people who ate unprocessed, intact fiber—the kind in whole grains and bran. But these days, many cereals are pumped up with *processed* fibers like inulin (chicory root fiber) or oat, oat hull, soluble corn, or soluble wheat fiber, which have been purified into powders or syrups.



The bran is the fiber-rich part of the wheat kernel. That's why we consider it a "whole" grain.

It's not clear how good those are at preventing constipation, lowering cholesterol, or anything else. Exception: the psyllium in Kellogg's All-Bran Buds does both.

Unfortunately, you can't tell from the ingredients or Nutrition Facts how much of each kind of fiber a cereal contains. So we denied Best Bites to cereals that listed processed fiber ahead of bran in the ingredients list (or that contained processed fiber but no added bran), even if they met our fiber minimum.

4 Minimize added sugars. It's not just kids' cereals. Adult cereals like Kashi GoLean Crunch have 3 teaspoons of added sugars per (1-cup) serving. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 6 teaspoons of added sugars a day for women and 9 teaspoons for men.

Our Best Bites don't limit added sugars. Why? Because the Food and Drug Administration doesn't require Nutrition Facts labels to separate the naturally occurring sugar in fruit (like raisins) from added sugars like evaporated cane juice, brown rice syrup, honey, fruit juice concentrate, agave nectar, and high-fructose corn syrup.

(Note: We withheld Best Bites from cereals—like General Mills Fiber One Honey Clusters—that contain the sugar substitutes monk fruit extract or sucralose, which we rate as "Caution," or that have acesulfame-potassium, which we rate as "Avoid." See chemicalcuisine.org.)

Instead, add your own fruit to a cereal that has little or no added sugars, like bran flakes, shredded wheat, Cheerios, or Uncle Sam Original. Best Bites that do that for you include Bob's Red Mill Old Country Style Muesli, Alpen No Sugar Added, and Erewhon Organic or Uncle Sam Skinner's Raisin Bran.

5 Skip the coconut oil. A half cup of granola made with coconut or coconut oil can hit 5 to 10 grams of saturated fat. That's a quarter to half a day's worth. Our Best Bites have less than 3 grams of sat fat per serving.



PITCHING PROTEIN

“9g Protein. Stay Full Longer!” says the Kashi GoLean Crunch box.

“Helps support a healthy metabolism,” crow the Post Great Grains Protein boxes. “Because protein takes longer to break-down than fat and carbohydrate, the body uses more energy to digest protein and this helps you burn more calories.”

Gets about half its “10g protein” from your milk.

“10g of Protein per serving helps fuel your body with sustained energy,” says Post Honey Bunches of Oats Protein

Granola with Dark Chocolate.

Ignore those claims. They don’t need to be backed by good evidence, and there isn’t much evidence that higher-protein diets help fill you up, slim you down, or give you more energy (see cover story). It’s a protein free-for-all out there.

However, getting more protein may help prevent muscle loss in middle-aged and older people. So a cereal that hits 10 to 13 grams of protein per serving may appeal to you more than one that has the usual 2 to 6 grams. Just make sure your protein isn’t coming at a steep calorie cost. Look for at least 8 grams of protein for every 100 calories of cereal (like regular Kashi GoLean has).

And beware of tricks. Fiber One Protein, Cheerios Protein, Post Grape-Nuts Fit Cranberry Vanilla, Quaker Oatmeal Squares, and others make claims like “10g protein with milk.” Why include the 4 grams of protein in a half cup of milk? Marketing.

Want more protein? Top a half cup of plain greek yogurt (10 grams) with your cereal. Voilà! A cereal & yogurt parfait.



HAVE A HEART?

Heart claims—explicit or implied—are all over cereal boxes. You may be surprised to find out why:

It has a heart claim because (like most cereals) it’s low in saturated fat.

■ **Whole grain.** A cereal (like General Mills Oatmeal Crisp) that’s at least 51 percent whole grain can make a claim that’s not just about a healthy heart but about heart disease. (The claim: “Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease.”)

■ **Soluble fiber.** “Can help lower cholesterol as part of a heart healthy diet,” says the yellow Cheerios box. “Three grams of soluble fiber daily from whole grain oat foods...may reduce the risk of heart disease. Cheerios cereal provides 1 gram per serving.”

Kashi’s Heart to Heart cereals make a similar claim. The catch for both: you’d have to eat three servings a day to lower your cholesterol by 3 percent.

■ **Low in saturated fat.** Chocolate Cheerios are too low in oats to make a heart disease claim based on soluble fiber. No problem. Instead, General Mills makes a heart disease claim based on Chocolate Cheerios’ low level of saturated fat. Of course, almost any cereal, even one that’s half sugar, could make that claim. General Mills Basic 4 does it, too.

■ **Antioxidants.** “3 Antioxidants,” say the Kashi Heart to Heart boxes. “Antioxidant Vitamins A, C, & E, Including Beta-Carotene,” says Kellogg’s Smart Start Original Antioxidants—a “Heart Healthy Selection” cereal that isn’t even all whole grain. In study after study, those antioxidants didn’t prevent heart disease, and the companies know it.

■ **Omega-3.** “250mg ALA From Flaxseed,” boasts Kellogg’s Raisin Bran Omega-3. Too bad the shorter-chain omega-3 ALA is less likely to lower your risk of heart disease than the longer-chain omega-3s EPA and DHA that are found in fish oil.



ENERGY SCAM

“Helps get you going & keeps you going,” promises Post Honey Bunches of Oats Morning Energy Cinnamon Crunch. “Don’t skip breakfast! Your body needs Morning Energy! Fuel your body with a breakfast that provides whole grain, fiber & protein for energy that lasts.”

“Morning energy” just means 220 calories a cup.

Did someone say “energy”?

On food labels, the word “energy” just means calories. All the rest is fluff.

“B-Vitamins help to shuttle the energy from the foods you eat into your body’s cells,” says Kellogg’s Crispix. “Think of them as partners in energy metabolism.” Trust us. If you’re feeling tired, it’s not because you’re short on B vitamins.

The bottom line: Ignore “energy” claims. Instead, look for one of our Best Bites. Whether or not their fiber-rich whole grains keep you from getting hungry (and tired) mid-morning, they’re better for you.

GLUTEN-FREE, NOT CALORIE-FREE

“Reinventing Granola,” say Larabar’s Renola Grain Free Granolas. “Using a delicious blend of non-GMO nuts, fruits, and seeds, we left out the grain (gluten free!) and packed in the flavor.”

And the calories. Renola crams 340 of them in just half a cup, thanks to its nuts, seeds, and dried fruit.

The first ingredient in many gluten-free cereals is whole-grain corn or brown rice. That’s fine, but neither typically supplies enough fiber to hit our minimum for a Best Bite. Our only gluten-free Best Bites: Enjoy Life Crunchy Flax Original and four of the five Love Grown Oat Clusters Granolas.



Cuts the grains (and gluten), not the calories.



Cereal Numbers

Best Bites (✓✓) have: 1) whole grains as the first two grains in the ingredients list OR little or no refined grains (we counted bran as whole grain), 2) at least 3 grams (light cereals) or 6 grams (heavier cereals) of fiber per serving (if a cereal contains processed fiber, bran has to appear above it in the ingredients list), 3) no acesulfame-potassium, sucralose, or monk fruit extract, and 4) less than 3 grams of saturated fat per serving. Within each category, cereals are ranked from most to least fiber, then least to most calories and sugar.

Lighter Cereals (about 1 oz. per serving)

	Calories	Fiber (g)	Total Sugars (tsp.)*	Protein (g)
General Mills Fiber One Original (½ cup)	60	14 ^P	0 ^S	2
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Smart Bran (½ cup)	80	13 ^P	1.5	3
✓✓ Kellogg's All-Bran Buds (½ cup)	80	13 ^P	2	3
✓✓ Kellogg's All-Bran Original (½ cup)	80	10	1.5	4
Kashi Berry Blossoms (¾ cup)	100	6	1.5 ^S	2
✓✓ Kellogg's All-Bran Complete Wheat Flakes (¾ cup)	90	5	1	3
✓✓ Post Bran Flakes (¾ cup)	100	5	1	3
✓✓ 365 Organic (Whole Foods) Bran Flakes (¾ cup)	110	5	0.5	3
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Heritage Bites (¾ cup)	110	5	0.5	3
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Flax Plus Multibran Flakes (¾ cup)	110	5	1	4
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Multigrain Oatbran (¾ cup)	110	5	1	3
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Heritage Flakes (¾ cup)	120	5	1	4
✓✓ 365 Organic (Whole Foods) Whole Wheat Flakes (¾ cup)	100	4	1	4
✓✓ Weetabix Organic Crispy Flakes (¾ cup)	110	4	1	3
✓✓ Kashi Heart to Heart Honey Toasted Oat (¾ cup)	120	4 ^P	1	4
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Flax Plus Cinnamon (¾ cup)	120	4	1	3
✓✓ Love Grown Power O's Original (1 cup)	130	4	0.5	6
✓✓ Weetabix (2 biscuits)	130	4	0.5	4
✓✓ Arrowhead Mills Organic Oat Bran Flakes (1 cup)	140	4	0.5	5
✓✓ General Mills Cheerios (1 cup)	100	3	0	3
✓✓ General Mills Total (¾ cup)	100	3	1	2
✓✓ General Mills Wheaties (¾ cup)	100	3	1	2
Cascadian Farm Organic Fruitful O's (¾ cup)	100	3 ^P	2	2
✓✓ 365 Organic (Whole Foods) Wheat Waffles (¾ cup)	110	3	1	3
✓✓ Post Grape-Nuts Flakes (¾ cup)	110	3	1	3
✓✓ Barbara's Toasted Oatmeal Flakes (¾ cup)	110	3	1.5	4
✓✓ Trader Joe's Toasted Oatmeal Flakes (¾ cup)	110	3	1.5	3
✓✓ Cascadian Farm Organic Honey Nut O's (1 cup)	110	3	1.5	2
✓✓ General Mills Multi Grain Cheerios (1 cup)	110	3	1.5	2
Kellogg's Special K Vanilla Almond (¾ cup)	110	3 ^P	2	2
✓✓ Cascadian Farm Organic Purely O's (1¼ cups)	120	3	0	3
✓✓ Arrowhead Mills Organic Spelt Flakes (1 cup)	120	3	0.5	4
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Heritage O's (¾ cup)	120	3	0.5	4
✓✓ Mother's Toasted Oat Bran (¾ cup)	120	3	1	4
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Millet Rice (¾ cup)	120	3	1	4
Kellogg's Special K Protein (¾ cup)	120	3	1.5 ^S	10
✓✓ Love Grown Power O's—Chocolate, Honey, or Strawberry (1 cup)	120	3	2	4
General Mills Banana Nut Cheerios (¾ cup)	100	2	2	1
General Mills Chocolate Cheerios (¾ cup)	100	2	2	1
Kellogg's Jif (¾ cup)	100	2	2.5	2
General Mills Honey Nut Cheerios (¾ cup)	110	2	2	2
Post Honey Bunches of Oats Honey Roasted (¾ cup)	120	2	1.5	2
Kellogg's Corn Flakes (1 cup)	100	1	0.5	2
Kellogg's Crispix (1 cup)	110	1	0.5	2

WHOLE GRAIN OR NOT?

"8g or more per serving," says the "Whole Grain" stamp on boxes of Cascadian Farm Organic Fruitful O's, Kashi GoLean, and Kellogg's Jif.

All three cereals are proud of their 8 grams of whole grain. But 8 grams isn't much. It's just 27 percent of a lighter cereal, which has a 30-gram serving size, and just 15 percent of a heavier cereal, which has a 55-gram serving size.

(That's why it would help if labels revealed how much whole and how much refined grain cereals contained.)

But you need the ingredients list to know why a cereal is low in whole grains. Kashi GoLean (a Best Bite) has just 8 grams because it's high in soy, which isn't a whole grain (nor are other healthy ingredients like fruits, nuts, and bran). Jif and Fruitful O's have just 8 grams because they're high in sugar and refined corn meal.

So unless your cereal is 100% whole grain, get thee to the ingredients list. If the corn or wheat or whatever doesn't say "whole," assume it's refined. Some exceptions: brown rice, oats, graham flour, and sprouted grains are whole (or almost always whole), though the ingredients list may not say it.



Just 9 grams of whole grain because the first ingredient is refined rice.

IS IT REAL?

A few more tricks to watch out for:

■ **Fruit & nuts.** "Flavored with Real Banana and Natural Banana Flavor," says the box of Banana Nut Cheerios, which have more salt than real banana...and no nuts at all.

"Made with Real Fruit!" says Kashi Berry Blossoms, which has more acacia gum than dried berry powder.

■ **Simply.** "Natural" is out. "Simple" is in. (That way, companies can't get sued for using artificial ingredients.) But "simple" may be anything but.

Granola is traditionally made from oats, dried fruit, nuts, oil, and honey. Quaker's line of Simply Granola also has whey, inulin, nonfat dry milk, glycerin, whey protein concentrate, and natural flavor. "Simple" can be real...or simply spin.

■ **Chocolatey.** That's code for "not real chocolate." In Kellogg's Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory Chocolatey Almond, "chocolatey" means sugar, palm kernel oil, cocoa, emulsifiers, and artificial flavor. So much for "premium ingredients" from a "premier chocolatier." 🍫



"Chocolatey" doesn't mean "chocolate."

	Calories	Fiber (g)	Total Sugars (g) ^(*)	Protein (g)
Heavier Cereals (about 2 oz. per serving)				
✓✓ Kashi Good Friends (1 cup)	160	12 ^P	2.5	5
✓✓ Weetabix Organic Crispy Flakes & Fiber (1¼ cups)	170	11 ^P	2.5	6
✓✓ Barbara's High Fiber Medley (1 cup), average of all flavors	190	11 ^P	2	5
✓✓ Uncle Sam Supergrains Rye & Hemp (¾ cup)	230	11	0	8
✓✓ Kashi GoLean (1 cup)	160	10 ^P	2	13
General Mills Fiber One Honey Clusters (1 cup)	170	10	2 ^S	4
✓✓ General Mills Fiber One Raisin Bran Clusters (1 cup)	170	10	3.5	3
✓✓ Uncle Sam Original (¾ cup)	190	10	0	7
✓✓ General Mills Fiber One Nutty Clusters & Almonds (1 cup)	190	10	3	4
✓✓ Kashi GoLean Vanilla Graham Clusters (1 cup)	170	9 ^P	2	11
✓✓ 365 (Whole Foods) High Fiber Morning O's (1 cup)	170	9 ^P	2	6
✓✓ Trader Joe's Organic High Fiber O's (1¼ cups)	180	9 ^P	2	6
✓✓ Post Shredded Wheat Wheat'n Bran (1¼ cups)	200	9	0	6
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Optimum Slim Low Fat Vanilla (1 cup)	200	9 ^P	1.5	9
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Optimum Power Blueberry Cinnamon Flax (¾ cup)	200	9 ^P	2	9
✓✓ Cascadian Farm Organic Hearty Morning Fiber (¾ cup)	170	8 ^P	2	4
✓✓ Trader Joe's Raisin Bran (1 cup)	170	8	4	4
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Flax Plus Raisin Bran (¾ cup)	190	8	3	6
✓✓ Post Raisin Bran (1 cup)	190	8	4.5	5
Kashi GoLean Crunch (1 cup)	200	8 ^P	3	9
✓✓ Bob's Red Mill Old Country Style Muesli (½ cup)	220	8	2.5	8
✓✓ Kellogg's Raisin Bran (1 cup)	190	7	4.5	5
✓✓ Engine 2 Plant-Strong (Whole Foods) Rip's Big Bowl (½ cup), average of all flavors	210	7	0.5	7
✓✓ Kashi 7 Whole Grain Nuggets (½ cup)	210	7	0.5	7
✓✓ Post Grape-Nuts (½ cup)	210	7	1	6
✓✓ Post Great Grains Digestive—Berry Medley or Vanilla Graham (1 cup), average	210	7	2	6
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Flax Plus Pumpkin Raisin Crunch (¾ cup)	210	7	3	6
✓✓ Post Great Grains Protein—Cinnamon Hazelnut or Honey, Oats & Seeds (1 cup), average	230	7	2	8
✓✓ Post Great Grains Banana Nut Crunch (1 cup)	230	7	2.5	6
✓✓ Post (or other brands) Shredded Wheat Original Big Biscuit (2 biscuits)	160	6	0	5
✓✓ General Mills Wheat Chex (¾ cup)	160	6	1	5
✓✓ Post (or other brands) Shredded Wheat Spoon Size Original (1 cup)	170	6	0	6
✓✓ Kashi 7 Whole Grain Flakes (1 cup)	170	6 ^P	1.5	6
✓✓ Erewhon Organic Raisin Bran (1 cup)	180	6	2	6
✓✓ Kashi Organic Promise—Autumn Wheat, Berry Fruitful, or Island Vanilla (27-29 biscuits), avg.	180	6	2	6
✓✓ Cascadian Farm Organic Raisin Bran (1 cup)	180	6 ^P	3	4
✓✓ 365 Organic (Whole Foods) Raisin Bran (1 cup)	180	6	3.5	4
✓✓ Uncle Sam Skinner's Raisin Bran (1 cup)	190	6	2	6
✓✓ Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats (21-25 biscuits), average of all flavors	190	6	2.5	5
✓✓ Enjoy Life Crunchy Flax Original (gluten-free) (¾ cup)	200	6	0.5	7
✓✓ Kellogg's Frosted Mini-Wheats Little Bites—Chocolate or Original (1 cup), average	200	6	2.5	5
Kellogg's Cracklin' Oat Bran (¾ cup) ^F	200	6	3.5	4
✓✓ Alpen No Sugar Added (⅔ cup)	210	6	2	7
✓✓ Quaker Toasted Oat Bran (1¼ cups)	210	6	2	7
✓✓ Alpen Dark Chocolate (⅔ cup)	220	6	2	7
Kind Healthy Grains Oats & Honey Clusters (gluten-free) (½ cup)	220	6 ^P	2	4

	Calories	Fiber (g)	Total Sugars (g) ^(*)	Protein (g)
✓✓ Post Shredded Wheat Honey Nut (1 cup)	220	6	3	5
✓✓ Nature's Path Organic Heritage Crunch (¾ cup)	230	6 ^P	1.5	6
✓✓ Love Grown Oat Clusters Granola—Apple Walnut Delight, Raisin Almond Crunch, Simply Oats, or Sweet Cranberry Pecan (gluten-free) (½ cup), average	260	6	3	6
Kellogg's Raisin Bran Omega-3 (1 cup)	180	5 ^P	4	4
Quaker Simply Granola (½ cup), average of all flavors	200	5 ^P	3	5
Quaker Oatmeal Squares (1 cup), any flavor	210	5	2	6
Alpen Original (⅔ cup)	210	5	2.5	7
Post Grape-Nuts Fit Cranberry Vanilla (⅔ cup)	220	5	2	6
Familia Swiss Muesli Original Recipe (½ cup)	220	5	3	6
Post Honey Bunches of Oats Morning Energy Cinnamon Crunch (1 cup)	220	5 ^P	3	6
General Mills Fiber One Protein Maple Brown Sugar (1 cup)	220	5 ^P	4	6
Bear Naked Fit Vanilla Almond Granola (½ cup)	240	5	2	8
General Mills Oatmeal Crisp—Crunchy Almond or Hearty Raisin (1 cup), average	240	5	3.5	6
Bear Naked Original Cinnamon Protein Granola (½ cup)	280	5	3	12
Back to Nature Classic Granola (½ cup)	200	4	2.5	6
General Mills Basic 4 (1 cup)	200	4	3	4
Familia Swiss Muesli No Added Sugar (½ cup)	210	4	1.5	6
Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free Muesli (½ cup)	220	4	2.5	6
Back to Nature Chocolate Delight Granola (½ cup)	220	4	3	5
General Mills Cheerios Protein—Cinnamon Almond or Oats & Honey (1¼ cups), average	220	4	4	7
Cascadian Farm Organic Apple Crisp Protein Granola (¾ cup)	230	4	3	10
Cascadian Farm Organic Cinnamon Raisin Granola (⅔ cup)	230	4	4.5	5
Bear Naked Maple-icious Pecan Granola (½ cup)	260	4	2.5	6
Purely Elizabeth Original Ancient Grain Granola (gluten-free) (⅔ cup) ^F	280	4	3	6
Nature's Path Organic Love Crunch Dark Chocolate & Red Berries Granola (½ cup)	280	4	3	4
Lärabar Renola Grain Free Granola (gluten-free) (½ cup), average of all flavors ^F	340	4	3	9
Kind Healthy Grains Clusters—Banana Nut or Raspberry (gluten-free) (½ cup), average	190	3	1.5	4
Kellogg's Low Fat Original Granola (½ cup)	190	3	3.5	4
Kellogg's Smart Start Original Antioxidants (1 cup)	190	3 ^P	3.5	4
Post Honey Bunches of Oats Protein Granola with Dark Chocolate (½ cup)	220	3	3	10
Nature Valley Protein Granola (½ cup), average of all flavors	220	3	3.5	10
Quaker Real Medleys—Cherry Almond Pecan or Peach Apple Walnut (¾ cup)	240	3	3.5	5
Cascadian Farm Organic Oats and Honey Granola (⅔ cup)	250	3	3.5	5
Kellogg's Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory Chocolatey Almond (1 cup)	220	1	4.5	3

✓✓ Best Bite. * Includes any naturally occurring sugar (typically from fruit) and/or added sugar. ^P Number includes added processed fiber. ^S Cereal contains acesulfame-potassium, sucralose, or monk fruit extract. ^F Contains at least 3 grams of saturated fat.

Daily Targets (for a 2,000-calorie diet): **Fiber:** at least 28 grams. **Protein:** 75 grams. **Daily Added-Sugars Limit:** 6 teaspoons (25 grams) for women, 9 teaspoons (38 grams) for men. (To convert teaspoons of sugar to grams, multiply by 4.2.)

Source: company information. The use of information from this article for commercial purposes is strictly prohibited without written permission from CSPI.

RIGHT STUFF

FOOD PORN

ON TARGET



You gotta give Target credit. Its **Simply Balanced Black Beluga Lentils, Cultivated Wild Rice, Farro, and Whole Grain Garlic 6 Grain Blend** are a steal.

Move over, brown rice. Now you can whip up something different in just 90 seconds. That's because the lentils and grains are already cooked, and can sit in your pantry in their shelf-stable pouches until you're ready to pop them into the microwave.

Bonus: Target adds no salt (or anything else except water) to three of the four. And the Garlic 6 Grain Blend—a mix of grains like brown rice, rye, bulgur, quinoa, and wild rice—has just 150 milligrams of sodium per cup.

(Caution: Simply Balanced also sells saltier grains. The Garlic & Olive Oil Quinoa, Southwestern-style Quinoa & Brown Rice, and Whole Grain Quinoa each has about 650 mg of sodium per cup. That's in the same ballpark as Near East and Uncle Ben's.)

So toss some warm Simply Balanced lentils, farro (think nutty, like wheat berries), or wild rice into a salad of chopped spinach, cherry tomatoes, and shredded carrots with a dijon mustard vinaigrette.

Or combine them with chopped roasted or sautéed vegetables like red and yellow bell peppers, scallions, butternut squash, and broccoli. Mmm.

Is Target trying to offer whole foods to people who don't want to pay Whole Foods prices?

That's Simply Brilliant.

target.com—(800) 440-0680

TORRIBLE

"Sausage in a rich marinara sauce with layers of ricotta, parmesan and mozzarella cheese surrounded by a golden flaky crust."

That's **Bertolli**, waxing poetic over its "New!" **Italian Sausage Italian Style Torta**, which turns out to be nothing more than a frozen pot pie with an Italian-style gourmet shtick.

"Pair with Pinot Grigio," suggests the box. "Light, crisp flavor." But, as an article on bakingbusiness.com explained, parent company ConAgra is simply "capitalizing on demand for its Marie Callender's and Banquet pot pie platform."

Are we in luck, or what?

Each petite pie is just 5 inches across and 1½ inches high, yet it manages to pack 720 calories, a full day's saturated fat (19 grams), and two-thirds of a day's sodium (1,060 milligrams) into that itty, bitty space. It's like polishing off a plate of Olive Garden Spaghetti & Meat Sauce, but with more than twice the sat fat.

Got no room for 720 calories from white flour, pork sausage, cheese blend, and other gourmet ingredients? No problem! Your body will just set up some more storage space where your waist used to be.

Bertolli's **Three Cheese Marinara Italian Style Torta** isn't much better.

Tip: anything that looks like a pot pie, regardless of what it's called, is perfect for padding your new pot belly.

villabertolli.com—(800) 418-2302



dish OF THE MONTH



Black Bean Soft Tacos

Sauté 1 diced onion in 2 Tbs. olive oil until soft, 3-5 minutes. Stir in 1 tsp. minced garlic and 1 tsp. chili powder. Add 1 15 oz. can no-salt-added black beans with liquid. Simmer for 5 min. Spoon into 10 warm corn tortillas. Top with guacamole, cabbage, and fresh lime juice.

quicktip

Power go out? Thawed or partially thawed food from the freezer can be refrozen as long as it still contains ice crystals. It may not taste as good as if it had remained frozen, but it should be safe.