



April 3, 2019

# Wellness Wednesday

## Organic Snacks Aren't Necessarily Healthier Junk Food. Here's Why.

Our increasingly health-conscious society has created more and more of a demand for organic versions of our favorite junk foods — things like Newman's Own "Oreos" or Annie's boxed mac and cheese — and American consumers are eating it up. But are these products actually healthier for us than their non-organic equivalents? Research says: yes and no.

There are several reasons the organic choice might be healthier. Studies show that organic crops contain higher levels of antioxidants and certain vitamins and minerals, for one, and organic dairy contains much higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids. Plus, eating organically means limiting your exposure to chemical pesticides and herbicides, trace residues of which have been found in cookies, crackers and breakfast cereal.



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program contains a number of restrictions on synthetic substances and additives, such as artificial food dyes, which some research links to behavioral disorders in children. And the program also restricts the use of antibiotics and hormones in animal products like meat and dairy, which are particularly problematic. Multiple studies link antibiotics in food with large-scale antibiotic resistance — "a looming health crisis," according to a 2015 study — that could lead to an influx of antibiotic-resistant infections. Nonetheless, the overwhelming consensus among nutrition experts is this:

### ORGANIC JUNK FOOD IS STILL JUNK FOOD

From a macronutrient perspective, organic junk foods are often identical to their conventional counterparts. They tend to be equally high in sugar and low in protein and fiber, which makes a food less satiating and more likely to cause health problems long term.

Organic junk foods also may contain similarly refined sugars and starches. Although the USDA restricts the use of high fructose corn syrup, for example, brown rice syrup — a highly refined sweetener with an equally high glycemic index — is often used as a replacement. And consuming too much sugar, whether it's organic cane sugar or high fructose corn syrup, can lead to the same adverse health effects.

"The specific source of sugar may not be very important to the person's overall health," said Mary Camire, professor of food science and human nutrition at the University of Maine. "Long-term high consumption of fructose from any source — organic or not — can lead to insulin resistance, fatty livers and many other health problems, and so can

excessive sucrose consumption, whether the sugar comes from sugar cane or beets." While a granola bar made with organic raisins may contain slightly higher antioxidant levels from the organically grown grapes, it doesn't make up for the poor nutrient content of the food.

## MANY OF THE NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF ORGANIC CROPS ARE LARGELY LOST TO PROCESSING

"Depending on the intensity and severity of the food processing, nutritional content including vitamins and minerals will be degraded in the processed food," said Balu Nayak, associate professor of food processing at the University of Maine. In packaged cookies, for example, "the baking temperature of dough is high enough to degrade or destroy most of the nutrients. It does not matter whether the wheat flour is organically or conventionally grown."

This is certainly true in the case of "ultra-processed foods," the industrially processed foods that include junk foods like white bread, chicken nuggets and candy. These foods go under intensive processing that strip whole foods of their naturally occurring nutrients and often include a long list of additives. And while the National Organic Program does limit the use of certain additives, organic foods aren't immune to "ultra-processing."

An ingredient derived from an organic source can be processed in the same way and present the same health risks as a conventionally sourced ingredient. In other words, we can't assume a product is healthy just because it's organic. Many organic brands tend to cater to a health-conscious crowd, meaning they'll often use less processing or healthier ingredients to appeal to their consumer. But the organic label alone does not guarantee this.

"Now that you see more and more junk food products with organic labels, it can create a health halo, which may mislead consumers," said Frank Hu, professor of nutrition and epidemiology at Harvard University. "Being organic itself will not offset the detrimental effects of many ultra-processed foods, which are typically loaded with added sugars, sodium and refined starch."

The "health halo" effect refers to a scientifically researched phenomenon in which certain claims, such as "low fat" or "made with organic ingredients" can lead us to assume a food is healthier or lower in calories. One study at Cornell University found that American consumers estimated an organic food to have 60 fewer calories than its conventional counterpart. Food manufacturers know this and may intentionally take advantage of it. Claims like "made with real fruit" or "made with organic ingredients" on labels can confuse consumers and convince us we're eating something healthier than we are. A product can claim it's "made with real fruit" even if it contains very little fruit or a highly processed version of that fruit.

So how can we tell what's a better option? We need to look carefully at the label. And not just the nutrition label, though that's important too. It can tell us the overall macronutrient content and the presence of certain vitamins and minerals. But because manufacturers can use synthetic fibers or other nutrients to boost their nutrition label, the ingredient list can better clue us in.

"It's important to look at ingredients and notice the components in the snack food," Hu said. "You'll be able to tell in the ingredient list whether the snacks include some whole foods or healthy food components like nuts or whole grains, and you can also tell how much sugar is added and whether the snack food contains relative amounts of fiber or protein."

In general, a lengthy list of ingredients means a food's been highly processed, especially if it contains refined sweeteners or additives like soy lecithin, glycerin or guar gum (all allowed under USDA organic restrictions). One more thing to keep in mind: Organic food labels can be confusing.

The USDA has four different labeling guidelines for organic products: "100 Percent Organic," "Organic," "Made with Organic Ingredients" and "Contains Organic Ingredients." Your best bet is to look for the USDA Organic Seal. While "100 Percent Organic" and "Organic" receive the USDA seal, if a food "Contains Organic Ingredients," it's not required to comply with any of the other organic restrictions.

Article source: <http://bit.ly/2FzBkcF>



# This Week's Exercise

## Plank With Lateral Arm Reach



### LET'S BEGIN!

1. START IN A PLANK POSITION.
2. KEEPING YOUR TORSO STABLE, SLOWLY REACH YOUR LEFT ARM OUT TO YOUR SIDE.
3. BRACE THROUGH THE ABS BY PULLING YOUR NAVEL TO YOUR SPINE. HOLD THIS POSITION FOR FIVE SECONDS. IF YOU FEEL TOO UNSTABLE, TRY MOVING YOUR RIGHT HAND SO IT IS UNDER THE CENTER OF YOUR CHEST RATHER THAN UNDER YOUR RIGHT SHOULDER.
4. KEEPING YOUR TORSO STABLE, BRING YOUR ARM BACK TO THE PLANK POSITION. DO NOT ROUND YOUR BACK OR TWIST YOUR SPINE.
5. REPEAT THIS SAME MOTION ON THE OTHER SIDE, EXTENDING YOUR RIGHT ARM TO YOUR SIDE. THIS COUNTS AS ONE REP.
6. COMPLETE 10 REPS ON EACH ARM.

Source: <http://bit.ly/2FBS5Uo>

*Regular exercise can help you control your weight, reduce your risk of heart disease, and strengthen your bones and muscles. But if it's been awhile since you've exercised and you have health issues or concerns, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor before starting a new exercise routine.*



## WHITE BEAN TURKEY CHILI



## Ingredients

olive oil spray  
2 small onions, chopped  
5 garlic cloves, chopped  
3 pounds 93% lean ground turkey  
1 (4.5 ounce) can diced green chilies  
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/2 tablespoon cumin  
1/2 tablespoon oregano  
2 teaspoons chili powder, to your taste  
1/2 to 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes (to your taste)  
1 bay leaf  
4 (15.5 ounce) cans of cannellini or navy beans, rinsed and drained  
2 cups chicken broth  
1/2 cup reduced-fat sour cream

### *Optional toppings:*

Monterey Jack or Pepper Jack Cheese, shredded  
diced avocado  
cilantro  
sliced jalapeno  
sour cream

## Directions

1. Heat a large heavy pot or Dutch oven over medium flame. When hot, spray with oil.
2. Add onions and garlic, saute until soft, about 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Add the meat and cook, breaking it up until white and cooked through, about 5 minutes.
4. Add diced green chilies, salt, cumin, oregano, chili powder, red pepper flakes and cook for 2 minutes.
5. Pure 1 can of beans in the blender with 1 cup of the broth. Add to the pot with the remaining beans, broth and bay leaf and bring to a boil.
6. Cover and reduce to a simmer, about 30 to 35 minutes mixing occasionally, until thickened and the flavors meld.
7. Stir in sour cream and cook 4 to 5 minutes. Adjust seasoning and salt to taste.
8. To serve, topped with your favorite toppings.

For Slow Cooker and Instant pot directions, visit the recipe online [here](#).

## Nutrition Information

Yield: 12 servings  
Serving Size: 1 cup

### Amount Per Serving:

Freestyle Points: 4  
Points +: 8  
Calories: 307  
Total Fat: 12g  
Saturated Fat: 4g  
Cholesterol: 88mg  
Sodium: 835mg  
Carbohydrates: 25g  
Fiber: 9g  
Sugar: 2g  
Protein: 30g

Recipe source:  
<http://bit.ly/2FBSO44>