

Food Industry Snares

Some foods sound healthy until you read the fine print. The food industry has some tricks to make you think that food is more healthy than it actually is:

- use “fruit” in the name
- Fat-free cookies/cakes: Usually have nearly as many calories as their full-fat counterparts
- Sugar-free cookies/candy: Can have as many calories as the regular foods, just no sucrose (table sugar).
- Wheat bread/crackers: “Wheat” means refined white flour (with little fiber) unless it’s preceded by the word “whole.”
- Fruit drinks, beverages, punch: contain little fruit juice but are mostly just sweetened water.
- Fruit pops: Only distantly related to fresh fruits or their juices. Basically frozen sweetened water.
- Trail mix: Its “high energy” comes from concentrated calories, largely fat.
- All-fruit jam: No more nutritious than regular jam. Sugar is sugar.
- Reduced-fat peanut butter: Nearly as many calories as the regular stuff (the fat is replaced by corn syrup solids).
- Granola bars: Nutritionally more like candy bars than whole grains.
- Spinach pasta: Very little spinach and no nutritional advantages.
- Chicken hot dogs: Only a little better than pork/beef dogs. unless labeled “reduced-fat.”
- Frozen yogurt: Usually lots of added sugar; some have 9 grams of fat per cup. Compare labels.
- Bran muffins: May contain no whole-wheat flour, but lots of eggs, butter, oil. sugar. and other sweeteners. A large one may have as much fat as a Big Mac and more than 500 calories.
- Packaged “air-popped” popcorn: Some brands are loaded with fat.
- Banana chips: More like potato chips than bananas or dried fruit. Lots of fat, calories, and usually sugar.
- Fast-food chicken or fish sandwiches: Usually breaded and deep- fried. Nearly as many calories and as much fat as a Big Mac.

Questions

1. Watch TV during your assigned time(s) and, for each ad, record the specific product, the product category, the target audience, claims made about the product in the ad, and devices used to sell the product. Refer to the claims listed above to see if any of them are mentioned.