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HEALTH FOODS THE EXPERTS WON'T EAT



You think you're doing the right thing by filling up on so-called healthy, or lower-fat foods. But these nutritionists reckon we are pumping ourselves with the wrong stuff. Here's how to swap it...

OUR EXPERTS

- **ALICE MACKINTOSH** is a nutritional therapist at The Food Doctor Clinic, Thefooddoctor.com
- **JACKIE LYNCH** is a nutritional therapist and founder of Well-well-well.co.uk
- **SARAH SCHENKER** is a leading dietician, see Sarahschenker.co.uk
- **AMANDA HAMILTON** is a leading nutritionist, see Amandahamilton.co.uk
- **LORNA DRIVER-DAVIES** is a nutritional therapist at TheNutriCentre.com
- **AJ PERRERA** is a trainer at Fitness First Gym in South Kensington, London

FAT-FREE SALAD DRESSING

'These often contain sugar and artificial additives,' says TV nutritionist **Amanda Hamilton**. 'But more importantly, putting oil on salad actually makes it healthier. Research shows you absorb far more nutrients from fruits and vegetables when you combine them with fat.'

Swap it for: **Make your own healthy dressing with one part balsamic vinegar to three parts olive oil.**

MARGARINE

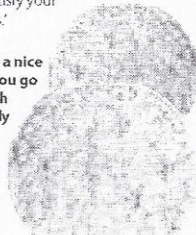
Margarine can save a possible 100 calories and 10g of fat per 100g, says nutritional therapist **Alice Mackintosh**. This may be a tempting colour, creaminess and softness which have been found to raise levels of their cholesterol. As for the butter, it's a natural product. Nut butters are a healthier alternative too because nuts contain healthy fat.

Swap it for: **Alice would rather people ate butter – in moderation – as at least it's a natural product. Nut butters are a healthier alternative too because nuts contain healthy fat.**

RICE CAKES

'They don't just smell bad,' says **AJ**, 'these are also extremely high on the glycaemic index, which means they flood your body with easy-to-process carbohydrates. That will cause rapid spikes in your blood sugar level, followed by rapid lows where you crave sugary snacks. Ultimately, they'll do little to satisfy your hunger or your dieting goals.'

Swap it for: **If you want something crunchy to put a nice topping on, AJ suggests you go for oatcakes instead, which release energy more slowly and are more filling.**



PROBIOTIC DRINKS

'These don't contain high enough levels of friendly bacteria to help your gut health,' says **Jackie**. 'Our gut has hundreds of billions of bacteria of many different varieties; one drink containing maybe a few million bacteria of just one strain won't make much difference. These drinks also tend to be high in sugar, which actually feeds the harmful bacteria in your gut.'

Swap it for: **Jackie recommends taking a probiotic supplement, or eating more 'prebiotic' foods (ones that feed the good bacteria) like garlic, onions and asparagus.**

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PACKAGED MEAT

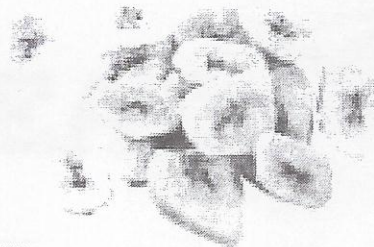
'Lots of people snack on slices of ham and reformed chicken as part of a low carb-diet,' says dietician **Sarah Schenker**. 'But these foods are high in added salt, and there's a link between preserved, salted or smoked meat and the risk of bowel cancer.'

Swap it for: Go for smoked salmon or mackerel. Sarah says the benefits of their omega-3 content outweighs the negatives. But she suggests eating them in moderation, and eating fresh oily fish too.

DECAF COFFEE

'First off: decaf coffee (and tea) still have small amounts caffeine in them,' says **Amanda**. 'I also have concerns about the decaffeination process itself. The cheapest method, known as the "direct solvent method", uses chemicals to dissolve and extract the caffeine. While it's not been shown to be harmful to human health, I don't advocate exposing the body to unnecessary chemicals.'

Swap it for: Organic decaf uses a non-chemical decaffeination process.



BANANA CHIPS

'It's just dried fruit - so it can't be that bad, can it?' says personal trainer **AJ Perrera**. 'Well, some banana chips are actually fried in oil. You might as well eat crisps! Even the ones that aren't fried are loaded with sugar. Dried fruit has a much higher percentage of fruit sugar and is less filling than normal fruit, and bananas are a particularly high sugar fruit anyway.'

Swap it for: Eat the whole fruit so you get the highest amount of fibre and it fills you up more. And limit it to one serving of fruit per meal or snack to avoid spikes in your insulin levels.

SKIMMED MILK

This is basically sugary water, says nutritional therapist **Lorna Driver-Davies**. 'Skimming takes out fat-soluble nutrients like vitamin D, vital for immunity and brain health. It also has a higher amount of lactose (milk sugar) than full-fat milk, and sugar makes you fat.'

Swap it for: 'If you're watching your weight, you're better choosing full-fat milk and drinking less.'

