What’s the Deal With Energy Bars?

It is best to eat a variety of whole foods at each meal to provide a well-balanced diet. On days you need to grab something to prevent skipping a meal or snack, an “energy bar” may be a good alternative. Energy bars can also provide energy before and/or after a work out or participation in a sporting event. Remember to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water or non-caffeinated beverages.

There are several types of “energy bars” available at the market. Examples include performance bars, meal replacement bars, snack bars, women’s bars and low-carbohydrate bars.

Here are some tips for choosing the healthiest energy bar:

- Try to avoid bars with palm kernel oil or partially-hydrogenated fat in the first five ingredients on the label. Limit saturated fat to 3 grams or less per bar and no trans fat.
- For weight control, choose a bar with at least 3 grams of fiber.
- Women may want to choose a bar that contains at least 300 mg of calcium per serving to help meet their daily calcium needs.
- Sugar should not be more than half the grams of carbohydrates in the bar. Try NOT to select a bar with high fructose corn syrup, glucose, or fructose as the first ingredient.

Find New Ways to Move

TOM@V is part of a countrywide campaign encouraging everyone to increase physical activity. The reason is obvious—it helps keep you healthy and happy. Make it a daily challenge to find ways to move your body. Anything that gets your body moving is not only a fitness tool, it is a stress buster. Do not let the thought of exercise scare you. It doesn’t have to be an hour in the gym or a 45 minute spin class, aerobics, or kickboxing. But that’s great if you are up to it. Think ‘move’ in small increments of time. Climb stairs if given a choice between that and elevators. Take a walk, chase your kids, toss a ball with friends. Whatever it is—just move.
Salads are healthy, but even too much of a good thing can be bad for you. Be sure to watch portion sizes with whatever you eat. And when it comes to salads, beware of the dressings. Many dressings are very high in fat and calories, so try a low-fat or low-calorie version of your favorite dressing. Another trick is to have your dressing served on the side. Get a bite of salad on your fork and then lightly dip it into the dressing.

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Sizzling Salmon-and-Spinach Salad with Soy Vinaigrette

DRESSING:
3 tablespoons thinly sliced green onions
3 tablespoons rice vinegar
3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon water
1 teaspoon sesame seeds, toasted
1 teaspoon bottled minced garlic
1 teaspoon dark sesame oil
1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper

To prepare dressing, combine first 8 ingredients in a small bowl, and stir well with a whisk. Pre-heat boiler.

SALAD:
2 teaspoons dark sesame oil, divided
4 cups thinly sliced shiitake or button mushroom caps
1 cup (1-inch) sliced green onions
1 cup fresh or frozen corn kernels, thawed
4 (6-ounce) salmon fillets (about 1 inch thick)
8 cups baby spinach
1 cup fresh bean sprouts
1 cup red bell pepper strips

To prepare salad, heat 1 teaspoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms and 1 cup onions; sauté 8 minutes. Stir in corn; remove from heat.

Place the fish on a foil-lined baking sheet; brush evenly with 1 teaspoon oil. Broil 8 minutes or until fish flakes easily when tested with a fork.

Place 2 cups spinach on each of 4 plates; top each serving with 1/4 cup bean sprouts, 1/4 cup red bell pepper, 1/2 cup mushroom mixture, and 1 fillet. Drizzle about 2 tablespoons dressing over each salad. Makes 4 servings.

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Quick Tip: Slide a spatula between the cooked fish and skin when removing the salmon from the pan. The skin will stick to the foil.

Also serve... Sesame Garlic Bread

Unroll 1 can refrigerated wheat bread dough on baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Combine 2 tablespoons light margarine (melted) with 1 teaspoon minced garlic and brush over bread, then sprinkle 1 tablespoon of sesame seeds on top. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes.

Go for the Greens

When choosing salad greens, go for darker varieties like romaine, endive, and spinach. It’s not that iceberg lettuce is bad for you—far from it—but darker greens are much richer in nutritional value. Salads are healthy, but even too much of a good thing can be bad for you. Be sure to watch portion sizes with whatever you eat. And when it comes to salads, beware of the dressings. Many dressings are very high in fat and calories, so try a low-fat or low-calorie version of your favorite dressing. Another trick is to have your dressing served on the side. Get a bite of salad on your fork and then lightly dip it into the dressing.

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Spring Showers Bring New Produce

April showers not only bring May flowers, they also bring you more choices in the produce aisle. May is here, so it is time to stock up! Warmer weather and more moisture mean berries, grapes, fresh greens and tender onions are arriving at your favorite market or produce stand. All these choices make it easier to include more produce in your healthful eating plan.

With the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommending we eat a range of two and a half to six and a half cups of fruits and vegetables every day (for the 1,200 to 3,200 calorie levels), take advantage of the many fresh spring options to meet your goals.

Add spring produce to casseroles, cold soups or serve them just as they are. For family members who might be hesitant to try new foods, add small amounts of new fruits and vegetables to their current favorite dishes.

And be sure to offer cut-up fruits and vegetables as quick snacks, especially for your children.

www.eatright.org

New Options for Fast Food

McDonald’s introduces a new Asian salad with 16 types of fresh greens, edamame (soybeans), snow peas, red bell peppers, toasted almonds, and mandarin oranges. It also comes with grilled chicken with an orange glaze. The calorie count for the salad is 290 calories and 10 grams of fat. Newman’s Own Lighten Up Sesame Ginger salad dressing adds an additional 90 calories and 2.5 grams of fat. The cost for the salad is $4.29. For more information, visit McDonalds.com.

Wendy’s introduces Frescata deli sandwiches nationwide. Varieties include: club (440 calories, 16 g fat), ham and Swiss (480 calories, 20 g fat), and turkey and Swiss (420 calories, 16 g fat). The bread alone accounts for 250 calories; the mayonnaise or sauce contains 60-80 calories. Full nutritional information is available at Wendys.com.

Drinking milk may help you lose weight

New studies indicate that consuming adequate amounts of calcium may do more than strengthen your bones. In fact, calcium helps break down body fat and may prevent fat cells from making fat. Researchers conducted several studies on calcium intake and weight. Results consistently showed that people who consumed more calcium had a lower body weight or gained less weight than those who consumed lower amounts of calcium.

For the best health benefits, try to consume at least 1,000 milligrams of calcium every day. Good sources include low-fat dairy products, dark-green leafy vegetables, and calcium-fortified foods.

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