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from your Hannaford Dietitian



Energy Bars: How Do I Choose?

In nutritional terms, “energy” is a synonym for calories, so generally all foods provide you with energy. Energy and fitness bars can be great snacks - they’re convenient and small enough to carry anywhere. The purpose of energy bars is to help offset fatigue and improve concentration at vital times. They’ve become so popular that sales have increased 50 percent in the last few years. With so many on the market, choosing the right one can be confusing, and many bars marketed as “fitness” or “energy” bars have a less than desirable nutritional profile, with high levels of inexpensive simple sugars and syrups (like glucose syrup, high-fructose corn syrup).

To become knowledgeable about reputable bars on the market, it's important to consider a few key elements:

- Carefully read nutrition labels and choose one with natural ingredients without artificial sweeteners, high-fructose corn syrup or artificial flavors or colors.
- Choose a bar with carbs from healthy ingredients such as fruits or fruit purées, natural grain syrups, nuts and whole grains to provide long-term energy.
- Watch calories and fat - up to 300 calories and 10 grams of fat is reasonable for a meal replacement, but cut that in half for a snack. Kashi® TLC Chewy bars are a perfect snack with just 140 calories and 5 grams of fat.
- Aim for energy snacks with zero trans fat and no partially hydrogenated oils.
- Choose a bar that has at least 3 grams of fiber and no more than 20 grams of sugar.
- Look for vitamins and minerals that you wouldn't get from foods (like calcium and iron).

Although these convenient snacks are a great way to avoid junk food, there's no substitute for real, balanced meals. Many of these bars are fortified with the same vitamins and minerals found in fruits and vegetables. However, they don't contain phytochemicals, bioflavonoids, natural fiber and balanced vitamins and minerals, so their health benefits aren't the same. Aim for a diet where most of your nutrients are from fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein.



Interested in learning more? Our registered dietitians hold classes, have on-the-sales-floor nutrition demonstrations and do healthy store tours. They can give you the information you need to make the healthy life style changes you want. For free nutritional advice, you can also email a private message to our staff registered dietitian at hannaford.com/dietitian