As popular culture makes the trend toward promoting a healthy lifestyle, food manufacturers are beginning to take note and jump on the bandwagon.

Thus, snacks and beverages are often marketed with the specific goal of enticing the consumer by touting a product’s benefits – conveniently dismissing the negative aspects.

Five of the most notorious health foods that really aren’t are revealed below. Prepare to be shocked!

**Parkay Spray Butter**

This “miracle food” seems to defy the laws of nutrition. A spray form of butter, free of calories and fat, just seems too good to be true. And it is.

While the label states that one serving (5 sprays) has zero calories and zero grams of fat, pumping 10 sprays (the equivalent of one teaspoonful of the product, and what is used by many consumers on just a couple of bites of food) has 1g of fat and 10 calories. By the time you finished the bottle, you consumed a grand total of 900 calories and 90 grams of fat. In other words, if you use a bottle per week, expect to gain about 13 pounds in a year.*

*Provided no other dietary changes are made and your activity level remains the same.

**Vitamin Water**

Simply put: vitamins and water. Do not judge this bottled drink by its label. One bottle of the popular “Dragonfruit” flavor has 32 grams of sugar. The label should read “vitamin water, 8 teaspoons of sugar.” To its credit, Dragonfruit vitamin water does have almost 250 mg of calcium (about a quarter of the U.S. recommended daily allowance). So, feel free to drink it for its nutritional value as long as you are prepared to burn off the calories by doing one of the following:

- 34 minutes of walking
- 14 minutes of jogging
- 10 minutes of swimming
- 19 minutes of cycling

*(Estimates based on energy expenditure of a 35-year-old woman, 5.74 ft tall, weighing 144 pounds.)*
Smoothies
You can find these upscale juice stands in just about every neighborhood. The menus abound with fresh ingredients and your choice of additives such as protein powder and “immunity boosters.” The most popular smoothies are better utilized as a meal replacement than as a snack.

While they are prepared with a few ounces of fresh fruit, the smoothie base, which affords the smoothie its fruity flavor (and lots of calories), is often laden with high fructose corn syrup or other forms of simple sugar.

Jamba Juice’s “Banana Berry” in original size has 450 calories—a decent amount for a meal. But, you may want to rethink your liquid lunch when you consider that its major fuel source is 93 grams of sugar. Thus, even the “natural” smoothie is packed with processed, calorie-dense components. For a real treat, mix your own fruit smoothie at home with skim milk and a scoop of whey protein powder.

Reduced Fat Peanut Butter
You may reminisce about this childhood favorite (usually accompanied by bread and jelly), but have been hesitant to add good ol’ PB&J back to your diet repertoire as an adult for fear of its hefty fat content? Not surprisingly, the major peanut butter producers introduced reduced-fat brands to alleviate your fear. But, beware! The nutrient breakdown of reduced-fat peanut butter is only slightly different than the usual high fat version. Take a close look at the labels side-to-side (please see box located on the top right).

For those who still crave that nostalgic sandwich, opt for a lower fat AND low sugar substitute to avoid ruining your calorie budget.

Fast Food Salads
Waist watchers and calorie counters across the nation were thrilled to see the emergence of healthier meal options at fast food and dine-in restaurants. However, we must not use this as an excuse to abandon the calorie calculations and food diaries that have kept us stable during the hard times.

McDonalds’ popular Caesar salad with grilled chicken is a great option when hunger strikes away from home. It has an astounding 30 grams of protein, only 6 grams of fat, and just 12 grams of carbs—totaling a lowly 220 calories! You can easily jog this meal off in 25 minutes. However, if you add a package (20 oz.) of creamy caesar salad dressing (190 calories and 18 grams of fat), be prepared to double your time on the treadmill.

Just say, “NO!” to this fatty meal wrecker and politely request low-fat Balsamic Vinaigrette (40 calories, 3 grams of fat), which you can burn off with just a 5 minute jog.

(Estimates based on energy expenditure of a 35 year old woman, 5.74 ft tall, weighing 144 lbs.)

Conclusion
Succinctly, we must all remember the importance of investigating carefully before we ingest anything. Do not be fooled by bold print and flashy labels. Reading the nutrition label on the back of the package is one of the simplest things we can all do to make wise decisions.

About the Author:
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OAC Membership
Building a Coalition of those Affected

About OAC Membership
The OAC is a grassroots organization and was created to bring together individuals impacted by the disease of obesity. One of the first steps to getting involved and making a difference is to become a member of the OAC.

Membership allows the OAC to build a Coalition of individuals impacted, bringing a unified voice in obesity. These are the individuals that make up OAC’s membership:

- Those who are currently struggling with their weight, whether obese or morbidly obese
- Those who are seeking treatment for their obesity
- Individuals who have successfully and/or unsuccessfully treated their obesity
- Friends, coworkers and family members of patients
- Professionals whose work is dedicated to those affected
- Organizations that support efforts in obesity

You probably find yourself fitting into one of the categories above. This is because obesity affects just about every person in the U.S. and directly impacts more than 93 million Americans. With this number continuing to grow, so must our voice. And that is where YOU become an important part in what the OAC strives to do.

Membership Categories and Benefits
The OAC wants YOU to be a part of what we do. No matter how you’re impacted, having individuals join our efforts who believe in making a difference is essential. That’s why the OAC offers various member categories, so you can get involved at your desired level.

Several valuable benefits also accompany your OAC membership, including an annual subscription to OAC News. Each membership category offers something different. To learn more about membership benefits, please visit the OAC Web site at www.obesityaction.org.

Not ready to join the OAC as a paid member?
You can become a “Friend of the OAC” and still have your voice be heard. When joining the OAC in this category, you can get involved in our efforts while receiving electronic benefits. There is no charge to become a “Friend of the OAC.” To sign-up, check the box below and complete the application.

- Sign me up as a “Friend of the OAC”

Membership Application

Yes! I would like to join the OAC’s efforts.
I would like to join as a/an:

- [ ] Patient/Family Member: $20
- [ ] Professional Member: $50
- [ ] Physician Member: $100
- [ ] Surgeon Member: $150
- [ ] Institutional Member: $500 (Doctors’ offices, surgery centers, weight-loss clinics, etc.)
- [ ] OAC Chairman’s Council: $1,000 and up

Name: __________________________
Company: ________________________
Address: _________________________
City: ___________ State: _______ Zip: ___________
Phone: ______________ Email: ______________

Payment Information
Enclosed is my check (payable to the OAC) for $ _________.
Please charge my credit card for my membership fee:
- [ ] Discover®  - [ ] MasterCard®  - [ ] Visa®  - [ ] Amex®

Credit Card Number: _______________________
Expiration Date: _________ Billing Zip Code: ____________

Mail to: OAC
4511 North Himes Ave., Ste. 250
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Or Fax to: (813) 873-7838