# Nutritionists warn of hidden risks in trendy healthy foods



# The Hidden Dangers of “Healthy” Foods: What Nutritionists Want You to Know

In a world inundated with conflicting dietary advice—from low-carb diets to intermittent fasting—the landscape of nutrition can feel overwhelming. Each trip to the supermarket presents a barrage of products boasting health benefits, which can easily mislead consumers. While many adhere to the mantra that one should not label foods as simply “good” or “bad,” nutritionists warn that numerous items marketed as healthy could undermine your dietary goals by containing hidden sugars, artificial ingredients, or being classified as ultra-processed foods (UPFs).

Nutrition experts shed light on several commonly perceived healthy foods that warrant scrutiny. Emma Bardwell, a registered nutritionist and author of *The 30g Plan*, cautions against the widespread adoption of certain trendy ingredients.

### The Coconut Oil Conundrum

Coconut oil has become synonymous with health even among wellness influencers, yet it is primarily composed of saturated fats. Bardwell notes that while it can enhance the taste of dishes, relying on it as your primary cooking oil could elevate your risk of atherosclerosis. Instead, she recommends switching to heart-healthy oils like olive or avocado, which boast beneficial fatty acids.

### Himalayan Salt: The Salt of Controversy

Another health trend is the rising popularity of Himalayan salt, often perceived as a more "natural" alternative. However, Bardwell highlights concerns about microplastic contamination. A study conducted in Australia revealed that Himalayan salt contains more microplastics than even conventional sea salt due to pollution in harvesting areas. This insight calls into question its supposed health advantages.

### Instant Oats and Sugary Gummies

The convenience of instant oats comes with a cost: a higher degree of processing that results in quicker digestion. Bardwell advises favouring less processed options like jumbo oats or oat bran for greater fibre content, which helps maintain stable blood sugar levels. Similarly, vitamin gummies have surged in popularity, but they often conceal high levels of added sugars, leading experts to label them as sweets masquerading as supplements.

### Foods That Seem Healthy but Aren’t

Several nutritionists echo Bardwell’s concerns. Maz Packham, founder of Nourishful Nutrition, identifies flavoured yoghurts as a sneaky source of hidden sugars that could disrupt blood sugar levels. Instead, opting for plain Greek yoghurt topped with fresh fruits and spices provides a healthier alternative.

Reema Pillai, a weight loss nutritionist, warns about plant-based 'meats' that, while environmentally friendly, can be laden with preservatives and artificial ingredients. She recommends sourcing plant-based proteins from whole foods like lentils and beans—these not only provide better nutrition but also avoid the pitfalls of UPFs.

Other commonly misjudged items include ready-made granola, which, despite its wholesome appearance, often harbours excess sugars and additives. Homemade granola crafted from oats, nuts, and seeds can offer a more nutritious start to your day.

### Portion Control: The Key to Healthy Snacking

Beyond individual foods, many experts point to the role of portion control in managing weight. Snacks like trail mix, which combine nuts and dried fruits, may appear healthy but are calorically dense. Pillai cautions that consumers often underestimate portion sizes, inadvertently leading to excessive calorie intake. She suggests creating homemade mixes that eliminate added sugars for a more guilt-free snack.

In a similar vein, energy balls made from dried fruits and nuts are praised for their convenience but can easily turn into calorie bombs if portions aren't monitored. Pairing them with fresh fruit might better regulate overall caloric consumption.

### The Importance of Awareness

Ultimately, the underlying message is one of mindfulness. Nutritionists stress the importance of scrutinising food labels and being aware of hidden ingredients. The titles of seemingly innocent products—like ‘high-protein’ or ‘low-fat’—can mask what lies beneath. The ongoing debate around health foods suggests that educating oneself plays a crucial role in not just achieving weight loss goals but also in fostering a sustainable, healthy lifestyle.

While it can be tempting to reach for items that promise quick benefits, the insights from experts serve as a timely reminder: always consider the quality of food over mere marketing slogans. By choosing whole, less-processed options and being conscious of portions, individuals can navigate the complex landscape of modern nutrition more effectively.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-14684131/Nutritionists-reveal-healthy-foods-actually-making-you-gain-weight-swap-for.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://bodynetwork.com/healthy-foods-causing-weight-gain-nutrition-coach-warns/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-14684131/Nutritionists-reveal-healthy-foods-actually-making-you-gain-weight-swap-for.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[3]](https://health.clevelandclinic.org/7-health-foods-that-can-ruin-your-diet-2)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-14684131/Nutritionists-reveal-healthy-foods-actually-making-you-gain-weight-swap-for.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[4]](https://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/surprising-foods-that-cause-weight-gain/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-14684131/Nutritionists-reveal-healthy-foods-actually-making-you-gain-weight-swap-for.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[5]](https://www.emedihealth.com/nutrition/avoid-these-worst-diet-foods)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://bodynetwork.com/healthy-foods-causing-weight-gain-nutrition-coach-warns/), [[6]](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/foods-that-make-you-fat)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-14684131/Nutritionists-reveal-healthy-foods-actually-making-you-gain-weight-swap-for.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://bestlifeonline.com/healthy-foods-gaining-weight/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://health.clevelandclinic.org/7-health-foods-that-can-ruin-your-diet-2), [[6]](https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/foods-that-make-you-fat)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-14684131/Nutritionists-reveal-healthy-foods-actually-making-you-gain-weight-swap-for.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://bodynetwork.com/healthy-foods-causing-weight-gain-nutrition-coach-warns/> - This article discusses several foods that are often perceived as healthy but may contribute to weight gain. It highlights items like coconut oil, trail mix, cheese, smoothie bowls, sauces and condiments, fancy coffee drinks, and cereal. The piece emphasizes the importance of portion control and being mindful of calorie-dense foods, even when they are marketed as healthy options.
3. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/7-health-foods-that-can-ruin-your-diet-2> - The Cleveland Clinic article identifies seven foods that, despite being labeled as healthy, can negatively impact one's diet. These include granola and trail mix, bagels, soup and salad, and others. The piece advises readers to be cautious of hidden calories and added sugars in these foods and suggests healthier alternatives to maintain a balanced diet.
4. <https://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/surprising-foods-that-cause-weight-gain/> - AARP's article sheds light on foods that are commonly believed to be healthy but can lead to weight gain. It covers items like fried fish, plant-based dairy foods with added sugar, and sugary drinks. The piece provides tips on healthier choices and emphasizes the importance of being aware of hidden calories in everyday foods.
5. <https://www.emedihealth.com/nutrition/avoid-these-worst-diet-foods> - This eMediHealth article lists several diet foods that can actually contribute to weight gain. It discusses items such as diet soda, commercial fat-free salad dressing, agave nectar, and low-fat yogurt containing sugar or flavorings. The piece advises readers to read labels carefully and be aware of hidden sugars and fats in these products.
6. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/foods-that-make-you-fat> - Healthline's article provides a comprehensive list of foods that can contribute to weight gain, even if they are perceived as healthy. It includes items like 'healthy' sweeteners, low-calorie cereals, and 'healthy' sweets. The piece emphasizes the importance of moderation and being mindful of portion sizes to maintain a healthy weight.
7. <https://bestlifeonline.com/healthy-foods-gaining-weight/> - Best Life's article highlights foods that are often considered healthy but can lead to weight gain. It covers items like chicken breast, tomato-based condiments, cereal bars, and cold cuts. The piece advises readers to be cautious of hidden calories and to opt for healthier alternatives to support weight management.