

A NEW CANNABIS CURE FOR PAIN?

BEST & WORST ENERGY BARS | **STORM PREP: 5 Home Insurance Fixes**

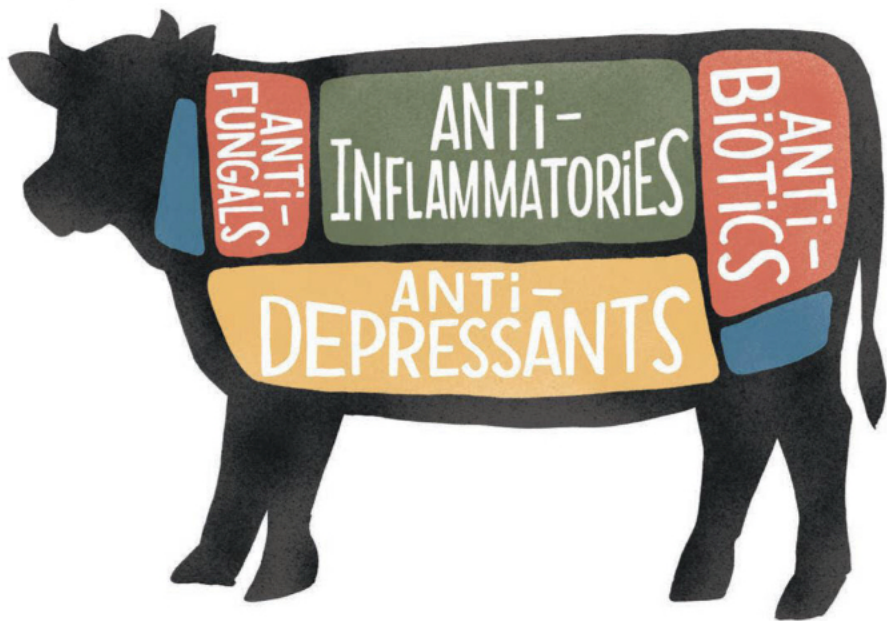
YOUR
FACEBOOK
SAFETY GUIDE

CR Consumer Reports®

OCTOBER 2018

REVIEWS & RATINGS

- Kia Sorento
- Smart Speakers
- Car Batteries
- Leaf Blowers
- Air Purifiers



What's Really^{*} in Your Meat?

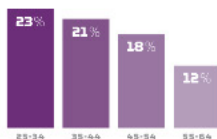
*Banned drugs have been detected in beef, poultry, and pork. How did they get there? And what can be done to keep them off our plates?

Product Update

The latest ratings from our labs

Eating a Bar May Show Your Age*

PERCENTAGE OF BAR EATERS WHO ARE AGES:



*Note: Two-thirds of Americans eat bars.
Source: Mintel, 2016.

Crunchy, Chewy, Tasty ... and Healthy, Too?

Can you find an energy bar that isn't loaded with sugar? Do all the 'good-for-you' ones taste terrible? We scrutinized the market to serve up the best choices.

by Rachel Meltzer Warren



WILD BERRY
PISTACHIO
BY THIS BAR
SAVES LIVES
\$2.00

59

OVERALL
SCORE



CRANBERRY
ALMOND +
ANTIOXIDANTS
WITH
MACADAMIA
NUTS
BY KIND
\$1.25

65

OVERALL
SCORE



INSIDE
CR'S LABS

During our blind taste tests, panelists enter texture and flavor details into an electronic ballot.

THE FIRST ENERGY BARS were created in the 1960s for astronauts and were later dubbed “space food sticks,” for their easy-to-consume shape and function. Another iteration showed up (on earth) in the ‘80s, marketed for long distance athletes who needed something portable to keep them fueled. These days you don’t need to be on a mission to Mars or training for the Chicago marathon to be an avid energy-bar eater: Two-thirds of Americans consume them, according to market research firm Mintel.

Our hectic on-the-go lifestyles are one reason for bars’ popularity. “They’re a convenient, no-fuss way to satiate a craving or hunger,” says Consumer Reports nutritionist Ellen Klosz. Consumers say that they buy them as snacks, as an energy pick-me-up before or after exercise, or as a meal substitute if they are trying to diet. The bars are often marketed to these specific needs, but the fact is that you see the same ingredients in many bars, albeit in somewhat different quantities. In fact, if you’re not careful, you could end up with a choice that isn’t all that different from a candy bar.

So which are tops in nutrition and taste? We analyzed 33 bars.

What’s in Them?

Our most important discovery: Many bars don’t live up to the healthy impression on the packaging. Just six out of the 33 tested bars earned a Very Good rating for nutrition. In choosing a bar, look for one that has few, if any, added sugars (such as cane sugar, honey, or brown rice syrup) in the ingredients list. It should also have 150 to 200 calories, 3 grams of fiber, and 3 to 6 grams of protein. But you can’t just shop by the numbers; it matters which ingredients supply those nutrients.

In our ratings, Klosz says, bars with whole foods like nuts and dried fruit as their main sources of

BETTER THAN BARS

Whole foods can be easy to pack, too. If you want a truly healthy alternative to an energy bar and are willing to put in a smidge more time and effort, here are five suggestions.

Breakfast

YOU WANT: A mix of protein and fiber so that you’re satisfied until lunch.
TRY: 2 hard-boiled eggs plus 2 Wasa multigrain crispbread crackers.

Middy Snack

YOU WANT: Something sweet with fiber and protein, so you avoid the vending machine.
TRY: ½ cup fiber cereal (like All-Bran or Shredded Wheat) mixed into a 6-oz. container of plain Greek yogurt with ½ cup blueberries or 1 Tbsp. dark chocolate chips.

Before Exercise

YOU WANT: Carbs for quick energy about an hour before exercise.
TRY: 2 to 3 medjool dates.

After Exercise

YOU WANT: Carbs to replenish energy stores and protein to help repair muscles.
TRY: A small whole-wheat tortilla spread with 1 Tbsp. almond butter and ½ small banana, sliced, then rolled up as a wrap.

Mini Meal

YOU WANT: A serving of veggies and fruit, along with some “fill-me-up” protein.
TRY: ¼ cup hummus and carrot, celery, and bell pepper sticks. Keep refrigerated until you’re ready to eat. Serve with a small whole-wheat pita and an apple.

protein and fiber got higher nutrition scores than those with added protein from soy isolates, rice, or peas, or added fiber from chicory root or corn. “Adding these ingredients can make a bar seem healthy, but they are highly processed. It’s better to get your nutrients from whole-food ingredients because they also supply a variety of vitamins, minerals, and other healthy compounds,” Klosz says.

Protein is the nutrient most people pay attention to when choosing a bar, according to Mintel, probably because of marketing messages that leave many believing their diets are deficient in protein. But the majority of people don’t need to worry, Klosz says. “Most of us get an adequate amount in our regular diet, and with one exception [the two RxBars], the bars in our tests with more than 6 grams of protein almost always contained processed sources.”

Added sugars are another concern. Agave syrup, brown rice syrup, corn syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, glucose syrup, honey, and tapioca syrup are among the sweeteners used in the bars we tested. “Though some of these may sound better for you than plain old sugar, they’re all added sugars and should be kept to a minimum in your diet,” Klosz says. “Better to choose a bar that has only fruit, or if it has added sugars, they’re toward the end of the ingredients list.”

How Do They Taste?

Another advantage of sticking with mostly whole-food ingredients: better taste. To wit, the bar that got our top taste score, Kind Plus Cranberry Almond + Antioxidants with Macadamia Nuts, had crunchy nuts, tart cranberries, and a sweet-but-not-too-sweet honey glaze. Alternatively, Quest Chocolate Peanut Butter Protein Bar, which got a Fair sensory rating, didn’t have much chocolate flavor and had a chalky, sticky mouthfeel.

Should You Bite on Health Claims?

Energy bar labels are covered in claims, from “gluten free” to “non-GMO.” We counted 31 different types of assertions on the labels of our tested bars that had to do with health, eating styles (such as vegan or macrobiotic), or sustainability—with the number of claims on some bars approaching a dozen.

The name of a bar can convey a health message, too. For example, This Bar Saves Lives may sound like it will save your life, but the name refers to the company’s pledge to donate “food aid to a child in need” with every purchase. RxBar makes you think prescription, but there’s nothing medicinal about it. And weight loss will obviously be on your mind when you grab a ThinkThin bar, but there are plenty of bars that have a similar nutrition profile and ingredients.

Here, we lay out what you need to know about the most common types of claims.

CLEAN/SIMPLE

These or similar claims are typically used when a product contains a limited number of—and mostly whole-food—ingredients. But these words don’t have any universal definition, nor should you conclude that they’re therefore free of processed ingredients. For example, though the label on Kind Plus Cranberry Almond + Antioxidants with Macadamia Nuts Bar says “ingredients you can see & pronounce,” it has some processed ingredients, such as chicory root fiber, glucose syrup, and soy lecithin.



NUT & SEED
CRUNCHY
BAR DARK
CHOCOLATE
ALMOND BY
RXBAR
\$1.30

61

OVERALL
SCORE

GLUTEN-FREE

The food doesn’t have gluten-containing ingredients, such as wheat, rye, or barley (gluten is a family of proteins found in those foods), but that matters only if you’ve been diagnosed with celiac disease or a gluten sensitivity. Otherwise, avoiding it hasn’t been shown to help with digestion, weight loss, or any other health improvement.

HIGH PROTEIN

If a product says “High in” or an “Excellent source of” a nutrient, it must—per Food and Drug Administration food-labeling rules—supply at least 20 percent of the daily value for the nutrient. “Good source of” means 10 to 19 percent. The Daily Value for protein is 50 grams. However, the protein can come from natural sources or processed ones; check the ingredients list.

LESS SUGAR

A food with this claim must contain at least 25 percent less sugar than the brand’s regular product or than a competitor’s product. Trouble is, 25 percent less may still be relatively high in added sugars. No added sugar means what it says, but the product can still contain naturally occurring sugars, for example, from fruit.

LOW GLYCEMIC

The glycemic index (GI) is a measure of how quickly and how high a food containing carbohydrates will raise blood sugar levels, low and slow is better. But many factors affect GI, and the claim is not regulated by the FDA. It’s possible for a manufacturer to alter the GI of a food by upping the fat content or by using added fiber or protein sources.

OMEGA-3s

Bars that have flax seed, chia seeds, or walnuts have a type of omega-3 called alpha-linolenic acid (ALA). Though it’s a healthy fat, there’s not enough evidence to say that eating foods with ALA is as good as getting your omega-3s from fish.

ORGANIC

A third of the bars in our test were certified organic by the Department of Agriculture (USDA). This means that at least 95 percent of the ingredients are certified organic. They can’t be grown with harmful chemical pesticides, and there are rules about the ingredients that can be used and the way they’re processed. For example, artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives; or genetically modified ingredients (GMOs) aren’t allowed. And organic ingredients can’t be processed with hexane, a solvent used to extract oil from crops (such as soy or corn) and to make soy protein isolate. Hexane is an air pollutant and can damage the brain and nervous system. Still, organic doesn’t de facto make the bar healthy; organic products can contain a lot of sugars and processed ingredients, such as added protein or fiber.

MADE WITH ORGANIC

This means that 70 percent of the ingredients are certified organic. If used, the individual ingredients must be specified, such as “made with organic oats and raisins” (the manufacturer can choose up to three to feature). The other 30 percent of ingredients can’t be artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives, or GMO, but the product can contain ingredients grown with synthetic pesticides or processed with hexane.

NON-GMO PROJECT VERIFIED

The standards required for the use of this seal include testing to verify that the ingredients are non-GMO. (Organics can’t contain GMOs.)

Ratings > **Bar Wars** Our testers tried 33 bars in two popular categories—berry-nut and chocolate-nut—rating them for nutrition and taste. Nutrition scores, which include an evaluation of ingredients, make up 60 percent of the Overall Score.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating	Nutrition Information								Price	Flavor & Texture Description	
				Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size (oz.)	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)			Fiber (g)
BERRY BARS														
✓	Pure Organic Wild Blueberry Fruit & Nut Bar	72	↑ ↑	1.7	180	6	1	3	31	3	25	0	\$2.00	Soft, moist, and dense, with whole blueberries and nut pieces. Sweet and tangy. Tastes mostly of dates.
✓	Kind Plus Cranberry Almond + Antioxidants with Macadamia Nuts Bar	65	↓ ↑	1.4	190	13	1.5	4	18	5	8	20	\$1.25	Plentiful whole roasted almonds, dried cranberries, macadamia nuts, and crisps. Honey glaze adds sweetness but is a bit sticky. Very crunchy texture.
✓	Lärabar Fruit & Nut Bar Blueberry Muffin	62	↑ ↓	1.6	190	9	1.5	3	26	3	18	0	\$1.00	Soft and dense, with blueberries and soft cashew pieces throughout. Tastes mostly of dates. Slightly sweet and sour.
✓	Health Warrior Chia Bar Acai Berry	61	↑ ↓	0.88	100	5	0.5	3	14	4	5	45	\$1.10	Moist and dense, with a lot of crunchy seeds. Sweet and tangy fruit flavors. Notably small.
	Nature's Path Organic Superfood Blueberry Cashew Snack Bar	60	↓ ↑	1.3	190	11	5	5	18	4	7	10	\$1.80	Moist and soft, with cashew and pumpkin seeds throughout. Big coconut and mild blueberry flavors.
	This Bar Saves Lives Wild Berry Pistachio	59	↓ ↑	1.4	160	7	0.5	4	24	7	8	80	\$2.00	Crispy rice pieces, almonds, dried cranberries, and blueberries. Big fruit flavor, on the sweet side. Held together loosely by honey glaze.
	RxBAR Protein Bar Mixed Berry	57	↑ ↓	1.83	210	7	1	12	25	5	14	115	\$2.20	Very dense, tough, chewy bar that sticks to your teeth. Tart berry and candylike flavors overpower nuts. Sweet and slightly sour.
	The GFB: Gluten Free Bar Cranberry Toasted Almond	51	↓ ↓	2.05	240	10	1	12	29	4	14	95	\$2.30	Dense, slightly tough bar, with soft nut bits and cranberry pieces. Big almond extract (cherrylike) flavor. Bitter and slightly chalky.
	Luna Whole Nutrition Bar Blueberry Bliss	51	↓ ↓	1.69	190	6	2.5	7	27	2	10	105	\$1.80	Chewy oat granola, with blueberry-apple jam. Very sweet and fruity flavor. Grainy texture.
	GoMacro Macrobar Blissful Daybreak Blueberry + Cashew Butter	51	↓ ↓	2.3	270	10	1.5	10	36	2	11	35	\$2.90	Soft and dense, with blueberry and cashew pieces. Slightly sweet with a mild nut flavor. Slightly chalky.
	Nature Valley Trail Mix Cranberry & Pomegranate Chewy Granola Bar	50	↓ ↓	1.1	130	25	0	2	24	1	6	70	\$0.70	Slightly tough and chewy, with some whole almonds and dried cranberries. Sweet, slightly sour, and very slightly bitter.
	Clif Bar Organic Blueberry Almond Butter Energy Bar	42	↓ ↓	1.76	230	11	2	7	27	2	10	150	\$1.80	Soft, slightly crumbly and chalky. Slight nut-butter flavor. Perfumey blueberry flavor dominates. Sweet and slightly bitter.
CHOCOLATE BARS														
✓	Nature's Path Organic Superfood Dark Chocolate Peanut Snack Bar	63	↓ ↑	1.3	190	10	5	5	20	5	8	105	\$1.80	Soft and moist, with lots of coconut shreds, chocolate chunks, and soft peanuts. Sweet overall with a mild peanut flavor.
✓	Lärabar Nut & Seed Crunchy Bar Dark Chocolate Almond	61	↓ ↑	1.24	200	15	4.5	5	13	4	7	45	\$1.30	Crunchy, with finely chopped almonds, dark chocolate, and seeds. Slight coconut flavor. A bit dry and crumbly.
	Kind Peanut Butter Dark Chocolate Bar	60	↓ ↑	1.4	200	13	3.5	8	16	3	9	40	\$1.25	Crunchy, with big peanut and chocolate flavor. Firm and chewy, with crispy bits.
	Pure Organic Peanut Butter Chocolate Ancient Grain & Nut Crispy Bar	60	↓ ↑	1.23	160	9	2	5	18	2	8	85	\$2.00	Crispy bar, with plentiful peanuts, grains, and seeds. Chocolate and big peanut flavor. Somewhat sweet.
	Kind Protein Double Dark Chocolate Nut Bar	59	↓ ↑	1.76	250	17	4	12	17	5	8	125	\$1.70	Crunchy, with roasted peanuts, almonds, and crispy bits. Sweet and salty. On the large side.
	RxBAR Protein Bar Peanut Butter Chocolate	58	↑ ↓	1.83	210	10	2	12	22	4	13	240	\$2.20	Very dense bar, with unsweetened dark chocolate chips and tiny, chewy peanut pieces. Slightly sweet and sour. Quite sticky.

Recommended	Product	Overall Score	Rating	Nutrition Information								Price	Flavor & Texture Description	
				Nutrition score	Sensory score	Serving size (oz.)	Calories	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Protein (g)	Carbohydrates (g)			Fiber (g)
CHOCOLATE BARS Continued														
	Clif Bar Organic Chocolate Peanut Butter Energy Bar	56	I I	1.76	230	11	2.5	7	26	3	9	150	\$1.80	Soft, with oat pieces and a lot of peanut butter filling. Slightly sweet; dark chocolate flavor. Very slightly bitter.
	This Bar Saves Lives Dark Chocolate & Peanut Butter	56	I A	1.4	190	10	2.5	4	22	6	7	110	\$2.00	Sweet and salty with roasted peanuts, honey, and chocolate. Crunchy; lots of crispy bits.
	Fiber One Chewy Bars Oats & Chocolate	55	I A	1.4	140	4.5	2	2	29	9	8	90	\$0.60	Chewy. Has balance of oats and chocolate flavor, but quite sweet.
	Kellogg's Special K Nourish Chewy Nut Bar Chocolate Almond	55	I A	1.16	170	10	3	4	17	2	9	60	\$0.65	Chewy, with crunchy roasted almonds and peanuts, and chocolate chunks. Quite sweet, with slight coconut flavor.
	GoMacro Macrobar Protein Purity Sunflower Butter + Chocolate	54	A I	2.3	260	8	2	10	38	3	9	80	\$2.90	Dense and slightly tough, with crispy pieces throughout. Little sweetness or chocolate flavor, with slight sunflower seed flavor. Chewy.
	Luna Rica Chocolate Peanut Butter Fruit & Nut Bar	52	I I	1.41	160	8	2.5	4	22	3	17	125	\$2.00	Soft, with peanut butter filling. Little chocolate flavor. Slightly bitter and chalky.
	Kirkland Signature (Costco) Nut Bar Almonds, Cashews and Walnuts	52	I A	1.41	210	16	3	6	14	7	6	110	\$0.60	Crunchy, with almonds, cashews, walnuts, and sunflower seeds. Sweet and slightly salty. Big nut flavor. Slightly dry.
	The GFB: Gluten Free Bar Chocolate Peanut Butter	50	I I	2.05	240	11	3	12	28	4	14	65	\$2.30	Dense and slightly tough, with crispy rice and peanut bits. Not much chocolate flavor. Dry and slightly bitter.
	NuGo Organic Dark Chocolate Almond Protein Bar	50	I I	1.76	190	5	3.5	10	26	3	13	60	\$1.85	Gritty, with crispy soy and crunchy almond bits. Chocolate has a cherry note. Slightly bitter. On the large side.
	ThinkThin Protein Nut Bar Dark Chocolate	48	I I	1.4	190	12	2.5	9	16	3	8	115	\$1.75	Hard, dry, and crumbly blend of almonds and sunflower and pumpkin seeds. Mild chocolate flavor. Tastes somewhat stale.
	PowerBar Plant Protein Snack Bar Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter	46	D I	1.76	230	14	3.5	11	22	7	10	150	\$2.40	Crispy and chewy, with peanuts, pumpkin seeds, and a lot of crisps. Sweet, with mild chocolate and slight butterscotch flavors.
	Oatmega Grass-Fed Whey Protein Bar Chocolate Peanut	45	I I	1.8	200	7	2.5	14	22	7	5	120	\$2.00	Dry and crumbly, with chocolate chips, crisps, and peanut bits. Little chocolate flavor and a nonfat dry milk taste. Slightly bitter.
	Quest Chocolate Peanut Butter Protein Bar	41	I D	2.12	170	4.5	1	20	25	15	0.5	220	\$2.10	Dense and sticky. Not much chocolate flavor; slightly bitter. Tastes very processed, like it was made in a lab. Slightly chalky.
	Nature Valley XL Chewy Bars Protein Peanut Butter Dark Chocolate	40	D I	2.12	290	18	5	15	21	8	11	250	\$0.60	Chewy texture with crunchy peanuts, peanut butter, soy crisps, and chocolate. Big peanut flavor, but quite sweet. Gritty, slightly bitter. On the large side.
	Balance Chocolate Peanut Butter Nutrition Bar	40	D I	1.76	210	7	4	14	22	1	17	150	\$1.40	Dense chocolate-coated nougat-style bar. Moderately sweet, with soy and dry milk flavors. Slightly bitter.

HOW WE TEST: CR evaluated 33 snack bars (12 berry-nut and 21 chocolate-nut) for nutrition, sensory quality (using our trained sensory panel), and price. Products were selected to represent nationally distributed brands as well as new

product introductions based on market information. We calculated the **Nutrition score** based on calories per gram of food, total fat, saturated fat, fibers, sugars, and sodium. We also factored in the presence or absence of processed ingredients

(e.g., protein isolates) and whole-food ingredients (e.g., nuts, fruit). Products with more whole foods were given more points than those with more processed ingredients. USDA organic products were also given more points than those that

were not, because a USDA organic claim specifies standards regarding ingredients, how they are processed, and whether they are allowed in a product.