

Processed Food: What is OK and what you should AVOID

Whole (real) food are natural foods grown in the ground, minimally processed, usually do not have ingredient list and spoil fast. These include:

- Fresh Fruit & Vegetables
- 100% Whole Grains
- Nuts and Seeds

Processed foods are food which are not in their original state. They usually are packaged, boxed or canned and have ingredient lists.

- Fortified food (food with added nutrients)
- Heavily processed food (large amounts of hidden sodium, fats, and sugar)

"The term *processed* food includes *any food* that has been purposely changed in some way prior to consumption. It includes food that has been cooked, canned, frozen, packaged or changed in nutritional composition with fortifying, preserving or preparing in different ways.

Any time we cook, bake or prepare food, we're processing food. "

Torey Armul, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN, a spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

The Continuum of Processed Foods

Categories	Example	Explanation
Minimally processed food	Bagged carrots, chopped	These foods are often simply pre-
	lettuce, raw nuts	prepped in their original form for
		convenience.
Frozen and canned food	Frozen fruits and	Fruits and vegetables are often
	vegetables, canned fruits,	picked at their peak and frozen to
	vegetables, soup, beans	lock in nutritional quality and
		freshness.
Food with combined ingredients or	Pasta sauce, salad	Foods with added ingredients for
added nutrients	dressing, cake mixes,	flavor or texture or food with added
	ketchup, yogurt,	nutrients. Food are no longer in
	breakfast cereal	their original form.
Ready-to-eat foods	Crackers, granola, deli	Simple ready-to-eat food, are
	meat	usually heavily processed.
Pre-made meals	Frozen and microwave	The most heavily processed food
	meals, instant noodles	with added sugars, sodium and fats.











Processed Foods Continuum

Nutrition facts:

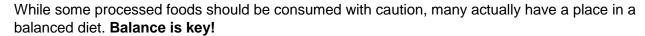




Reduced fat or fat-free products often have hidden added sugars. Added sugars often are used to improve taste and consistency in low fat products.

Sugar-free does not mean a product is calorie-free or has fewer calories. These products often contain sugar alcohols, which are lower in calorie but with added fats. (Starting July 2018, added sugars will be included on the Nutrition Facts Label.)

- Og trans-fat. The food might still contain less than 0.5g of trans fat per serving. Try to avoid words in the ingredient list such as hydrogenated oils and shortening.
- Cholesterol free doesn't mean, literally, no cholesterol. Cholesterol-free products contain less than 2 mg per serving. Cholesterol is only found in animal products like meat, dairy, eggs, butter, etc. Plant-based products are cholesterol-free.
- Studies suggest some frozen fruits and vegetables have just as many nutrients as their fresh counterparts.
- Some vegetables with high amounts of fat-soluble nutrients (vitamins A,D,E,K) such as carrots, leafy greens, and broccoli are able to protect nutrients longer in frozen state.
- Foods with high amounts of water-soluble vitamins (B and C) are best fresh such as bell peppers, citrus fruits, cabbage, and berries.
- Fortified food: Addition of key nutrients such as fiber, vitamins, iron, folic acid, iodine etc. to increase nutritional content (but also look for hidden sugar, sodium and fat).



Traffic light for food selection:

Green-Light food: GO!	Yellow-Light Food: Moderation	Red-Light Food: AVOID!
100% whole wheat/ whole	Multigrain or made with whole	White bread
grain product	grain*	
Fresh fruits/vegetables	Dried Fruits	Instant noodles
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Frozen fruits/vegetables	Canned fruit and vegetables	Microwave meal
Bagged/cut fruits and	Canned food (tuna, beans,	Frozen meal
vegetables	soup)	
Raw nuts	Flavored, salted nuts	Deli meat
Fortified products (milk,	Stored-bought cookies, yogurt,	Partially hydrogenated oils,
breakfast cereals - look for	cheese, crackers, granola (look	high-fructose corn syrup, or
at least 5 g of fiber per	for at least 2 g of fiber and less	artificial colorings (pie crust,
serving)	than 10 g of sugar per serving)	pudding, popcorn etc)

* There is no guarantee that multigrain bread is made with 100% whole grains or it's free of refined grains. Multigrain may have been processed to remove their bran and germ, which strips them of nutritional value (including fiber and important nutrients). No Trans Fatty Acids

Take home message:

- Do not assume, always **check and compare** food labels.
- Avoid added sugars, fats, sodium and hydrogenated oil in the ingredient list.
- It is **OK** to consume processed (frozen, packaged, fortified) food as some of them 🥨 have a place in a balanced diet. **Balance** is the key!

Sources:

- 1. http://www.eatright.org/resource/food/nutrition/nutrition-facts-and-food-labels/avoiding-processed-
- 2. http://www.foodandnutrition.org
- 3. http://projecthealthychildren.org/why-food-fortification





Nutrition

Facts

