



**HIGH IN FAT:
Tracker Roasted Nut**

Almost a third of this bar is fat. While some of this comes from peanuts and hazelnuts, the ingredients also contain vegetable fat and harmful hydrogenated fats.

**HIGH IN CALORIES:
9Bar Original**

This bar contains 277 calories – more than a four-finger Kit Kat – so not ideal if you're watching your weight. But many of the calories come from the nuts which are high in fat but healthy, unsaturated fats.



**HIGH IN SUGAR:
Nutri-Grain EleVenses**

This 45g bar contains 18g of sugar, almost four teaspoons. Although it contains raisins and apple puree, the main source of sugar is glucose-fructose syrup.



Healthy snacks?

Which? research reveals the cereal bars that are high in sugar, fat and calories, despite the manufacturers' attempts to convince you they're healthy. One even contained pork gelatine

Cereal bars are often promoted as healthy snacks or an ideal breakfast, and many people choose them rather than, say, a chocolate bar, as they think they're a healthier option. But Which?'s expert analysis of 30 bars from bestselling brands shows that few deserve this image.

All but one of the bars we looked at were high in sugar, and many were high in saturated fat. But poor labelling and confusing claims mean often this isn't clear.

HIGH IN SUGAR

Of the 30 bars we looked at, 16 contained more than 30% sugar. While this came from fruit in some of the bars, all except the NAKD Apple Pie bar contained added sugars.

And the manufacturers don't make it easy for you to tell how much added sugar there is in each bar (see 'Expert view', opposite).

By law, manufacturers have to list the ingredients in order of quantity. By having several different kinds of sugar, the names

appear further down the list – allowing healthier ingredients, such as oats, to be higher up, and giving the impression that the bar is healthier than it really is.

The first ingredient in the Tracker Roasted Nut is glucose syrup (sugar). Per bar, the highest in sugar was the Nutri-Grain EleVenses with 18g – that's nearly four teaspoons of sugar and 20% of your Guideline Daily Allowance (GDA) in one bar.

The Cadbury Brunch Bar Raisin contained 15g of sugar – around 15% of your GDA. Although the Dorset Cereals Blackcurrant, Cherry, Raspberry bar contained a similar amount of sugar, at 13g, this included sugar

from fruit, which offers additional nutritional benefits. But it's worth remembering that sugar from fruit will still contribute the same amount of calories as added sugar.

CALORIE COUNTING

Some of the bars, such as Alpen Light Apple & Sultana and Weetabix Oaty Bars Strawberry Crusher, promote the fact that they contain less than 100 calories. But 11 of the bars we looked at contained the same, or more, calories than a couple of digestive biscuits (142 calories).

The calories in some products, such as Belvita Breakfast biscuits – marketed as a breakfast replacement – come mainly from added sugar and vegetable oils, which provide no nutritional benefits. Other bars, such as Eat Natural and 9Bar Original, get some of their calories from nuts and seeds – offering additional nutritional benefits.

HIDDEN FAT

The Tracker Roasted Nut bar markets itself as containing 'no artificial colours, flavours or preservatives', but hydrogenated vegetable fat is listed in the ingredients. Hydrogenated fats are harmful in the same way saturated fats are – they raise cholesterol and can lead to heart disease.

Ten of the 30 were high (red) in saturated fat; six of these were aimed at children.

CHILDREN'S BARS

Seven of the bars we looked at were marketed to children. All were high (red) in sugar and two, Coco Pops Snack Bar and Monster Puffs Cereal and Milk Chocolate Bar, contained over 40% sugar – all added.

Several cereal bars, including the Monster Puffs Cereal and Milk Chocolate Bar and

Harvest Chewee Milk Choc Chip, promoted the fact that they had 'no artificial colours' and were 'great for your lunchbox'. They didn't promote the fact that they contain between one and two teaspoons of sugar per bar – one teaspoon is around 5g of sugar.

The labelling on the children's bars was sometimes confusing. The Kellogg's children's bars had adult GDA information, rather than children's. We have raised this with Kellogg's.

Rice Krispies Squares contain pork gelatine, which makes these cereal bars unsuitable for vegetarians and people who don't eat pork. But it was not clearly labelled on the packaging – we found it buried in the ingredients as part of the marshmallows.

WHICH? SAYS

Our research has highlighted the need for changes to make healthy choices easier for consumers, including:

- Clear, consistent front-of-pack nutrition labelling with traffic light colour coding.
- A responsible use of nutrition claims on food, so they are marketed accurately.
- Tighter controls over marketing to children, so cartoon characters aren't used to promote foods that are high in sugar.

Find out more about what Which? is doing at www.which.co.uk/healthyfood.



Contains pork gelatine: The labelling on the Rice Krispies Squares wasn't clear enough

EXPERT VIEW

High sugar levels

Shefalee Loth | Nutritionist and Which? food expert



None of the products we looked at had traffic light labelling on the front of the packs, so it was hard to compare the nutritional content. We applied our own traffic light ratings in the table, below.

It was surprising to see high levels of sugar in all the bars. In many cases fruit contributes to the overall sugar content. But anyone buying a bar can only use the ingredients list to help them figure out how much of the sugar is added, which is probably why we found that sugar appeared in 18 different guises: glucose syrup; honey; golden syrup; raw cane syrup; inverted sugar syrup; glucose syrup; molasses; glucose-fructose syrup; barley malt syrup; dried glucose syrup; partially inverted sugar syrup; fructose; lactose; prebiotic oligofructose syrup; grape juice concentrate; oligofructose syrup; dextrose; and sugar.

So keep an eye out for added sugar – regardless of what it's called, it's all sugar and provides the same number of calories gram for gram (4 kcal).

And if you're looking for a healthy snack, it's best to avoid bars with chocolate or yogurt toppings, which will add to the sugar content.

OUR RESEARCH

We looked at bars on supermarket shelves and chose 30 bars, bakes and breakfast biscuits from the top-selling brands, including those aimed at children. We focused on fruit and nut varieties and those that appeared most healthy, avoiding ones that contained chocolate and yogurt if possible.

Many of the bars weren't as healthy as you might expect. The Tracker Roasted Nut wasn't the highest in calories, but it was high in sugar, fat and saturated fat. The main ingredient is sugar (glucose-syrup) and it contains hydrogenated fat.

The Alpen Light Apple and Sultana was the only bar to have three green traffic lights for fat, saturated fat and salt, and was the lowest for calories overall. For the full results table go to www.which.co.uk/cerealbarnutrition.

	Calories (kcal)	Sugar (g)	Fat (g)	Saturated fat (g)	Salt (g)
THE HIGHEST AND LOWEST IN CALORIES AND FAT					
LEAST HEALTHY					
TRACKER Roasted Nut	127 kcal	7.3g	6.6g	2.4g	0.11g
HEALTHIEST					
ALPEN Light Apple and Sultana	63 kcal	4.7g ^a	0.7g	0.3g	0.03g
ALPEN Fruit & Nut	109 kcal	8.3g ^a	2.3g	0.4g	0.05g
NAKD Apple Pie	98 kcal	12g ^b	3g	trace	trace
NATURE VALLEY Chewy Trail Mix Fruit & Nut	118 kcal	6.9g ^a	3.2g	0.4g	0.1g
CHILDREN'S CEREAL BARS					
HIGHEST IN SUGAR					
MONSTER PUFFS Cereal and Milk Chocolate	120 kcal	11.8g	4.1g	1.9g	0.02g
HEALTHIEST					
WEETABIX Oaty Strawberry Crusher	79 kcal	4.6g ^a	1.4g	0.6g	0.04g

Figures are per bar. ^a Some of the sugar is from fruit ^b All of the sugar is from fruit, so an amber rating has been applied

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK Are you surprised at the levels of sugar in cereal bars? Does knowing about how much sugar some contain make you more likely to avoid them or choose another snack? Have your say at www.which.co.uk/cerealbars