

Nutrition Bars: Healthy Meal Sub or Candy Bar in Disguise?

Nutrition Bars Comparison

As with all *EN* comparisons, this is only a sampling of what's available. Products are listed alphabetically. ✓ = *EN*'s Picks. Nutrition bar picks contain no more than 200 calories (10% DV), 3 grams saturated fat (14% DV), 13 grams sugar, and at least 8 grams protein (8% DV).

Nutrition Bars	Serv Size	Calories	Fat (g)	Sat Fat (g)	Carb (g)	Fiber (g)	Sugar (g)	Sodium (mg)	Protein (g)
CHOCOLATE									
Balance Bar Gold Chocolate Mint Cookie Crunch	50	210	6	4	24	<1	14	160	14
Classic Zone Perfect Chocolate Caramel Cluster	50	200	6	4	25	3	16	290	14
Classic Zone Perfect Fudge Graham	50	210	7	3.5	23	3	15	200	14
Dark Zone Perfect Dark Chocolate Mocha	45	180	5	3.5	21	1	13	210	12
Dark Zone Perfect Dark Chocolate Strawberry	45	180	5	4	22	1	14	170	12
✓ Genisoy Protein Crunch Chocolate Chip	45	150	6	2.5	18	2	1	280	15
✓ Kashi Go Lean Crunchy Chocolate Pretzel	45	160	3	2.5	28	5	13	250	8
Kashi Go Lean Roll Chocolate Peanut	55	190	5	1.5	27	6	14	240	12
Larabar Chocolate Chip Brownie	45	200	9	2	31	5	23	30	4
MetRx Protein Plus Bar Chocolate Roasted Peanut with Caramel	84	310	9	7	32	2	2	290	32
NRG Bar Chocolate Chip Coconut	71	270	4.5	2	52	5	20	125	6
Power Bar Performance Energy Chocolate Peanut Butter	65	240	3.5	1	44	1	26	200	9
✓ Pure Protein Chewy Chocolate Chip	50	200	5	3	18	0	3	170	20
Special K Chocolate Delight Protein Snack Bar	26	110	3	2	16	<1	11	85	4
Supreme Protein Carb Conscious Rocky Road Brownie	50	210	9	6	16	<1	3	70	15
OTHER									
Balance Bar Cookie Dough	50	210	7	4	22	<1	17	200	15
Balance Bar Honey Peanut	50	200	7	3	21	<1	17	180	15
Balance Bar Sweet & Salty Peanut Butter	50	210	9	3	23	3	11	290	13
Biochem Sports Protein Bar 100 Calorie Caramel Nougat	25	100	3.5	2	13	2	7	65	6
Clif Builder's Vanilla Almond	68	270	8	4.5	30	3	22	240	20
✓ Clif Mojo Peanut Butter Pretzel	45	200	9	2	21	2	9	230	10
Greens + Natural Peanut Butter Protein Bar	59	250	9	1.5	24	2	18	130	18
Kardea Nutrition Bar Chai Spice	40	150	5	0.5	21	7	9	90	7
✓ Kashi Go Lean Crunchy Cinnamon Coffee Cake	45	160	4.5	2.5	26	5	13	240	8
Kashi Go Lean Oatmeal Raisin Protein & Fiber Bar	55	190	4.5	2.5	33	5	19	105	10
Luna Protein Cookie Dough	45	180	6	4	21	3	15	230	12
✓ Luna S'Mores	48	180	5	2	27	3	13	140	9
Odwalla Bar Mocha-walla	56	210	4	1.5	38	3	15	90	4
Power Bar Harvest Whole Grain Long Lasting Energy Bar Toffee Chocolate Chip	65	250	5	2.5	42	5	20	140	10
Power Bar Performance Energy Cookies & Cream	65	240	3.5	0.5	46	1	28	200	8
Power Bar Pria French Vanilla Crisp	28	110	3	2.5	17	1	9	80	5
Power Crunch Protein Energy Bar Peanut Butter Crème	40	200	12	5	10	1	5	100	13
Special K Peanut Protein Snack Bar	26	110	3.5	2	15	1	11	70	4
FRUIT									
Clif Bar Black Cherry Almond	68	250	5	1.5	44	5	20	110	10
Fruitified Zone Perfect Blueberry	50	190	4	1	25	3	14	200	14
Genisoy Organic Soy Bar Apple Cinnamon	45	160	3	0.5	26	2	16	85	8
Greens + Yogurt Coated Wild Berry Burst	59	260	11	4	28	2	22	120	13
Kardea Nutrition Bar Cranberry Almond	40	150	5	0.5	21	7	11	90	7
Larabar Key Lime Pie	51	220	10	3.5	31	4	24	0	4
✓ Luna Lemon Zest	48	180	5	2	27	3	13	115	9
Odwalla Bar Blueberry Swirl	56	200	3	1	41	4	19	125	3
Power Bar Harvest Whole Grain Long Lasting Energy Bar Apple Cinnamon Crisp	65	240	4	1	42	5	20	140	1

Note: g=gram, mg=milligrams, DV=Daily Value, daily requirement based on 2,000 calorie/day diet. Source: food label/website.

With promises of energy, weight control, cholesterol-lowering and more, you might think that nutrition bars are the food industry's answer to real food. Who needs to spend time cooking meals when you could just fill your cart with little bars in various shapes, flavors and colors? Sure, there are satisfying, healthy bars available that occasionally make a great on-the-run snack. And there are bars that can provide key nutrients before or during an intense workout. But, there are also many that contain so much sugar and saturated fat that a candy bar might be a better choice. No matter how nutritious a bar is, it still can't replace whole food. Researchers have discovered that foods contain far more than basic calories, carbs and vitamins. They contain phytonutrients like lutein, lycopene, resveratrol and many more that play roles in reducing your risk of chronic diseases. And nutrients in foods work synergistically to maximize the health benefits you obtain. Nutrition bars can't offer the same.

Helpful Hints

For the times when a nutrition bar is an appropriate choice, here are some tips on what to look for.

- **Watch the sugar.** No matter your reason for choosing a nutrition bar, getting a sugar rush followed by a sugar low after eating seven teaspoons of sugar isn't fun. While scanning labels, keep in mind that four grams of sugar equals one teaspoon.
- **Look out for fiber fortification.** Fiber does wonders for your body, however, isolated fibers like inulin, chicory extract and oligosaccharides may not provide the same benefit. Don't plan on downing fiber-fortified bars to meet your daily fiber needs.
- **Too much of a good thing.** While vitamins and minerals offer tremendous health benefits, going overboard is possible. Some nutrition bars are loaded with high amounts—in some cases 100 percent of your daily needs—for certain nutrients. Limit your intake to no more than one bar each day if it contains 100 percent or more of any particular nutrient.

—Heidi McIndoo, M.S., R.D.