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Do you read the labels on the food products you buy? If so, what are you looking for? With so much in the news nowadays about what's good for us and what we should eat, it's difficult to know whether what we are eating is the right thing or not. **Read the first part of the article below and discuss what words you think go in the gaps.**



Wall Street Journal
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The Fine Print: What's Really in a Lot of 'Healthy' Foods

A lot of Americans think they're eating a healthy diet these days. But it's easy to be fooled by our assumptions and the ways that food manufacturers play on them.

Take chicken. The average American eats about 90 pounds of it a year, more than _____ as much as in the 1970s, part of the switch to lower-fat, lower-cholesterol meat proteins. But roughly _____ of the fresh chicken sold in the U.S. is "plumped" with water, salt and sometimes a _____ extract called carrageenan that helps it retain the added water. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says chicken processed this way can still be labeled "all natural" or "100%

natural" because those are all natural ingredients, even though they aren't naturally found in chicken.

Producers must mention the added ingredients on the package - but the lettering can be small: just one-third the size of the largest letter in the product's name. If you're trying to watch your sodium to cut your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke, it pays to check the Nutrition Facts label. Untreated chicken has about 45 to 60 mgs of sodium per four-ounce serving. So-called enhanced or "plumped" chicken has between 200 and 400 mgs of sodium per serving, almost as much as a serving of _____.

Here are some other foods that may not be as healthy as they appear.

"Wheat bread." This is a meaningless term, since almost all bread is made with wheat. Some manufacturers add to the illusion by using a brown wrapper or darkening bread with _____ or molasses. The more healthful stuff is whole wheat, which includes the outer bran and the wheat germ inside, good sources of nutrients and fiber. Check the ingredients. If the first one listed is "enriched _____," you aren't

getting much whole grain.

Omega 3. Many foods are adding these essential fatty acids, said to cut the risk of heart disease, cancer and arthritis and help promote brain health. But you can get a lot more from natural foods. You'd need to drink _____ eight-ounce glasses of milk that is fortified with 32 mgs of Omega 3 to get as much of these fatty acids as you get in a three-ounce serving of salmon.

Fiber. Companies are adding fiber to all kinds of products - including yogurt, _____ and beverages. In many cases, the added fiber comes from purified powders, not the kind of fiber found in whole grains, beans, vegetables and fruits. The latter have been shown to lower cholesterol, reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease and may cut the risk of _____. But there isn't much evidence that "isolated" fibers like inulin, maltodextrin, oat fiber and polydextrin have the same effect. The Nutrition Facts label doesn't differentiate between the kind of fiber counted, so check the ingredients. "The added fiber is probably better than nothing, but it's not as good as fiber from natural sources."

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Listening Listen to the report and check your ideas.

Discussion What information in the report surprised you the most? Do the same practices exist where you live?

What do you think are the dangers of the following: salt substitutes; artificial sweeteners and products that are labelled zero grams of trans fat or zero calories? **Read the second part of the article and check your ideas.**

Salt substitutes. If you're trying to cut down on salt, check with your doctor before you start using a salt substitute. Most contain potassium chloride, which can exacerbate kidney problems and interact badly with some heart and liver medications.

Artificial Sweeteners. Sugar-free gum, mint and candy have fewer calories and are better for your teeth. But they frequently contain sorbitol, a plant extract that isn't completely absorbed by the body and works as a natural laxative. Consuming a single pack of gum or mints can cause bloating, flatulence, stomach pains and diarrhea in people who are sensitive to it. Some diabetics find that such sugar alcohols, which are sweet but have few calories, can raise their blood sugar.

Others include maltitol and xylitol.

Trans fat. There's been a remarkable reduction in these artery-cloggers in processed foods recently. But manufacturers are allowed to round down: Products labeled zero grams of trans fat can have up to 0.49 gram of fat per serving. You could still be consuming significant amounts of trans fat, "especially when the serving size is unrealistic," says Bonnie Taub-Dix, a nutritionist and spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association, a nonprofit professional organization. If the ingredients include partially hydrogenated oil, hydrogenated oil or shortening, a product isn't completely trans-fat free. And it may have considerable saturated fat as well. The

same rounding principle applies to zero calories, fat and carbohydrates. Walden Farms, which advertises a line of dips, spreads and dressings as "Fat Free, Sugar Free and Calorie Free," says its products do have trace calories and up to 0.49 gram of fat and carbohydrates per serving.

Will any of the products mentioned here hurt you? No, but they may not help you as much as manufacturers would like you to think. "Try to buy foods as close to their natural state as possible," says Ms. Taub-Dix.



Discussion Which information in the article worries you the most?

Vocabulary focus Discuss the meaning of these words and expressions from the article with your teacher:

switch (n) remarkable to be fooled roughly exacerbate meaningless

Now complete the gaps in these extracts from the article with the correct form of the words:

1 But it's easy _____ by our assumptions and the ways that food manufacturers play on them.

2 The average American eats about 90 pounds of it a year, more than twice as much as in the 1970s, part of the _____ to lower-fat, lower-cholesterol meat proteins.

3 But _____ one-third of the fresh chicken sold in the U.S. is "plumped" with water, salt and sometimes a seaweed extract called carrageenan that helps it retain the added water.

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- 4 “Wheat bread.” This is a _____ term, since almost all bread is made with wheat.
- 5 Most contain potassium chloride, which can _____ kidney problems and interact badly with some heart and liver medications.
- 6 There’s been a _____ reduction in these artery-cloggers in processed foods recently.

Vocabulary practice Write sentences about yourself using the words studied.



Language focus Look at this extract from the article:

*‘If you’re trying to **cut down** on salt, check with your doctor before you start using a salt substitute.’*

What does the phrasal verb ‘cut down’ mean here? There are a number of phrasal verbs with ‘cut’ in English. Complete the gaps with the appropriate words to make the expressions defined.

- 1 **cut** _____ to sever and cause to fall
- 2 **cut** _____ to move or thrust oneself, a vehicle, etc., abruptly between others
- 3 **cut** _____ to deprive someone of a supply of power, water, etc.
- 4 **cut** _____ to interrupt
- 5 **cut** _____ (of an engine, machine, etc.) to stop running
- 6 **cut** _____ to cut into pieces or sections
- 7 **cut** _____ to intercept

Practice React to these statements using the phrasal verbs studied:

- 1 I mustn’t eat so much chocolate.
- 2 To make chips, first you have to cut the potatoes into lots of small pieces.
- 3 The plane’s engines stopped and it crashed into the sea.
- 4 The robber tried to escape, but the police intercepted him at the end of the road.
- 5 They used a saw to remove all the trees in their garden.
- 6 He’s so rude, he started talking before I had finished my comment.

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Teacher's notes

Total pages 4 / student pages 3 / week of 01.06.09 / CD track 4 / intermediate+ (B1+)

Gapfill Words in order of appearance:

twice - one-third - seaweed - fast-food french fries - brown sugar - wheat flour - 40 - ice cream - colon cancer

Vocabulary focus

1 to be fooled 2 switch 3 roughly 4 meaningless 5 exacerbate 6 remarkable

Language focus What does the phrasal verb 'cut down' mean here? = to reduce

1 down 2 in 3 off 4 in 5 out 6 up 7 off

Practice Suggested answers:

1 I mustn't eat so much chocolate.

Suggested answer: I must cut down on chocolate.

2 To make chips, first you have to cut the potatoes into lots of small pieces.

Suggested answer: To make chips, first you have to cut up the potatoes.

3 The plane's engines stopped and it crashed into the sea.

Suggested answer: The plane's engines cut out and it crashed into the sea.

4 The robber tried to escape, but the police intercepted him at the end of the road.

Suggested answer: The robber tried to escape, but the police cut him off at the end of the road.

5 They used a saw to remove all the trees in their garden.

Suggested answer: They used a saw to cut down all the trees in their garden.

6 He's so rude, he started talking before I had finished my comment.

Suggested answer: He's so rude, he cut me off mid sentence.

Transcript

A lot of Americans think they're eating healthy these days, but it's easy to be fooled by your own assumptions and the way food manufacturers play on them. Take chicken and turkey. Americans are eating about twice as much as they did in the 1970s on the assumption that it's healthy, but up to one third of all the raw chicken sold in the US has added water, salt and even seaweed extract that helps it retain that extra fluid. What's more manufacturers can still put an all natural label on that kind of chicken because those are natural ingredients, they're just not naturally found in chicken. Here on this package of turkey you'll see juiciness enhanced with up to 12% solution. Also check the nutrition facts on the back of the package and look under the sodium content. Unenhanced chicken should be about 45 to 60mg of sodium per four ounce serving. The kind that's enhanced like this can have up to 400mg of sodium which means that that raw chicken you think is so healthy could have as much sodium as a small serving of fast food French fries. Another product you should look closely at is wheat bread. Wheat bread is pretty much a meaningless term because almost all bread is made out of wheat, even white bread. Manufacturers like to make you think you're getting something very healthy by calling it wheat bread, putting it in a brown package with stocks of wheat around it, and even darkening the bread with molasses or brown sugar. Make sure you look for whole wheat bread and ideally 100% whole wheat. If you turn the package over and look at the ingredients and the first ingredient is enriched wheat flour, you're not getting the whole grain. Companies are also adding Omega 3's to their products, but you'd have to drink 40 eight ounce glasses of this Omega 3 enriched milk to get the same number of Omega 3's you'd have in a regular piece of salmon. You'll also see a lot of added fiber in products these days, even products like yogurt, ice cream and drink mixes, but it's not the same kind of fiber that's naturally found in wholegrain products, raw vegetables and fruits. That kind of fiber has been demonstrated to lower your risk of colon cancer, heart disease and lower cholesterol. What's been added to these other products is something called isolated fibers, you can see them in the ingredients but with names like inulin, maltodextrin and polydextrin. They're not bad for you but they don't have the same science behind them, so it's not clear that they have all those other benefits of natural fiber. In fact a lot of nutritionists say the best thing to do is eat food as close to their natural state as possible. I'm Melinda Beck for the Wall Street Journal.