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Muesli Bars

Reporter: Susan Couhbor

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Bars. They've become the ultimate on-the-go snack food and their numbers on our supermarket shelves are multiplying.

"You go into a supermarket and there's half an aisle dedicated to them," said Adelaide mother of two, Angela Evans.

But while muesli bars, breakfast bars, muffin bars and fruit bars are often marketed as healthy options, Angela Evans isn't convinced.

"I really got looking at the food labels and found that a lot of them were very full of fat and sugar," she said.

According to Adelaide dietician Caron Milham, reading nutrition labels is the only way to get an accurate idea of what you're buying.

"However, a lot of our clients actually ask us, what are the best products? I can't be bothered reading tables, it's too hard, or I haven't got time, just tell us what to buy," Caron said.

So, Caron and her team of dieticians agreed to do just that. They assessed every muesli bar, muffin bar, breakfast bar and fruit bar they could find, in the major supermarkets.

All products were assessed for their added sugar content, their fat content, fibre, salt, nutrients and calories.

"What we're focusing on here is the average person who is trying to lose or control their weight ... and want a healthy eating pattern," Caron said.

"There are some positive nutritional benefits in all the products we've chosen today."

The products Caron recommends all have less than 160 calories and are low in fat and salt. None have more than 25% added sugar, if at all, and all muesli bars contain some dietary fibre.

"We've broken the products into three different categories based on the 'best', 'second to best', and the 'third to best'," Caron explained.

Here are Caron Milham's recommendations:

The following 'best' products contain no added sugars and less than five percent fat.

Freedom Foods Hi-Lite Breakfast bars
Go Natural 100% fruit bar
Sunripe school strips
Angas Park 100% fruit straps
Fruit Wise 100% fruit straps
Freedom Foods 100% fruit strips
Sun Valley 100% fruit strips
Orgran fruit bar

The second-place getters contain less than five percent fat, with natural sugar from fruit making up most, if not all of the sugar component

Weight Watchers Real Fruit Cereal bars

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Freedom Foods Super Berry breakfast bar
 LEDA Gluten free baked fruit filled bars
 Uncle Toby's Rainbow roll-ups
 Uncle Toby's Sours roll-ups
 Uncle Toby's Fun prints roll-ups

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The products in third-place did moderately well on the nutrition front, and many contain less than five percent fat.

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Kellog's K-Time bars
 Coles oven baked fruit bars
 Coles duos
 Uncle Toby's crunchy range
 Uncle Toby's chewy muesli bars - fruit flavours
 Freedom Foods muesli breakfast bars
 Norganic Crunchola breakfast bars
 Norganic Chewy breakfast bar
 Kellog's Special-K Bar - Original flavour
 Nestle Ski D'lite muesli bars
 Uncle Toby's Twistables
 Uncle Toby's Reels

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"From a weight or health point of view, the ones that are in the fair or the 'third group' are better than the standard product that didn't make a mention with us, however they're probably not the best option to include on a daily basis," Caron said.

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Visit Caron Milham and Associates website: www.milhamdietitians.com.au or call (08) 8377-2298.

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