

Putting Your (Shopping) Cart Before the Horse

If your kitchen is your command post, the grocery store is the front line in the weight management battle.

But where to begin? It can be overwhelming to wheel your cart into your favourite market, only to be faced with row after row of choices, many of which are packaged to appear healthier than they actually are.

But there are some secrets of the supermarket – and shopping cart. Once you learn them, it will demystify your grocery trips and ensure that you have the knowledge and the power to help keep your weight management journey on track.



Do Upset the Grocery Cart!

Just as you aim to organize your kitchen so healthy choices are easy to grab (positioned at eye level, front and centre of your fridge and pantry), so do supermarkets organize their shelves – but with a bit of a tricky twist. They tend to position popular, less healthy choices where you're most likely to see them (at eye level, front and centre) and toss them into your cart. But you'll learn to navigate the store like a pro, stop falling for the marketing gimmicks, and start being able to skillfully select the foods both that you love and that are the best choices for your healthy new lifestyle!

Friend or Foe?

By now you know some of the key components that make up healthy choices – whole grains, lean proteins, fresh produce (fruits and veggies), and healthy fats in moderation. Test your knowledge and select which one(s) of the following are good options to load into your cart (select all that apply):

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bran muffins | <input type="checkbox"/> Pita chips | <input type="checkbox"/> Granola |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dried cranberries | <input type="checkbox"/> Turkey bacon | <input type="checkbox"/> Frozen yogurt |

If you selected none of them, you're correct! Although they certainly sound like healthy foods, they actually contain high amounts of processed ingredients, or are high in fat and/or sugar. To explain: store-bought muffins are often oversized and laden with fat; dried fruits have high amounts of natural and added sugars so a tiny amount can be a high-calorie calamity; pita chips are baked, but they are baked with a lot of oil to create that lovely golden colour (plus they are highly processed, as is the turkey bacon); most granolas feature dried fruits and have a lot of added sugar or syrups to make them clump into those crunchy nuggets; and frozen yogurt may seem like a healthy alternative for ice cream, but what it (may) lack in fat, it makes up for in sugar!



So how can you avoid such sneaky snacking snafus? Read on!



Labels – Learn How Not to Get Lost in Translation

Nutrition fact labels appear on all packaged food products and give a wealth of information. But what does it all mean?

Serving size: Tells you what amount of the food the nutrition info is based on.

Nutrients: The list of items below Calories lets you select foods that have more of the nutrients you want and less of the ones you don't want.

The “% daily value”: Tells you how much or how little of a nutrient the serving size contains.

Tip: An amount of 5% or lower is a little; 15% or more is a lot. So aim for a little or no saturated, trans fats, sodium, and sugars, and a lot of fibre, protein, vitamin A, iron, etc.



Image source: Health Canada website.
Focus on the Facts Fact Sheet.

Where reading labels comes in really handy is when you want to compare labels of two similar foods to see which is the better bet for keeping your healthy eating on track. For example, if 1 cup of “Spaghetti Sauce A” contains 40% sodium and 15% trans fats, and the same serving size of “Spaghetti Sauce B” contains 4% sodium and 5 % trans fats, then you know that “B” is the wiser option to add to your cart.

Another way label reading can help you make informed choices is by helping you decide which portions are going to keep your eating in check. For instance, if the label on a box of cereal provides the nutrient information for 1 cup of the cereal, but you plan on eating a ½ cup, then you know you can divide the % daily value information in half. Likewise, if you plan on eating 2 cups of cereal, you know you will need to double the information in the % daily value to get an accurate idea of how much of the nutrients (and how many of the calories) you are taking in.



What Can I Do?

Aside from reading labels, you should tackle your trip around the food aisles with purpose and intention. You need to go in with a plan and be wise to the layout of the grocery store. We keep saying that knowledge is power, and that is never truer than when you are shopping for your food!

When?

- **Shop the perimeter!** That is, be aware that grocery stores stock their fresh and whole-food options like fruit, veggies, whole-grain breads, low-fat dairy products, and lean proteins like chicken and fish in the “outer ring” of the store. It doesn’t mean that all the options in those areas are healthy – that’s where reading labels will come in handy. Once you’ve done that, you can hit the centre aisles to seek out foods with short ingredient lists that show a food is close to its natural form – think dried and canned beans, tinned tomatoes, frozen fruits/vegetables, etc.

What?

- **Go armed with a list!** Before you venture out to the store, plan your meals for the week, or even for a few days. That will give you a better idea of what you’ll need – going with a list will better focus your shopping experience and reduce your chance of buying something (usually less healthy items!) on impulse. This is key to making sure you buy the foods you need and steer clear of the ones you don’t.

How?

- **Make it easy.** If you tend to forget written lists, keep a list on your smartphone. Wherever you choose to keep your list, it helps to organize it by section (dairy fridge, meat department, produce department and so on). That will go a long way toward keeping you on the straight and narrow and cut down on zigzagging frustratingly through the store!



Mind Shift



From here

"It's too much trouble to have to pick up every item and deliberate its merits!"

"I should just stick to the things I know are on the "good" list, like fruits and vegetables...that way I won't run into problems."

To here

"Once I get into the habit of reading labels, I'll just have to do a quick glance...it'll almost be second-nature. Plus, I'll get to know the details of my favourite items by heart soon enough!"

"I know if I just stick to the same types of foods that I may get bored and when I'm bored, I tend to choose unhealthy things. I shouldn't be afraid to venture into the "inner aisles" once I'm armed with knowledge. Variety is the spice of life!"

How to get there

At first, go shopping when you have a bit of time on your hands, and choose a time when the store is less crowded. You'll feel less rushed and can really take a good look at some of your old favourites and new alternatives and see how they are bringing you closer to or farther from your goal.

Also, avoid shopping when you are hungry, anxious/upset, or distracted.

Shopping on an empty stomach makes everything look delicious and causes you to check your conscience at the door.

Likewise, shopping in an emotional state can cause you to rationalize certain choices that you know aren't in your best interest!



Food for Thought

If you've had a love-hate relationship with grocery shopping, the tips we've shared will help you take back control of the situation so you can have the upper hand. You can't really "unlearn" what you now know, so you're already ahead of the game. But what would happen if you stick with your old ways and just wing it when grocery shopping? Let's look at the scenarios and see how this mindset could be causing you to trade off long-term benefit for a short-term gain:



Pro

If I skip reading labels I can get out of the store faster and avoid temptation. If I just walk up and down the aisles, I'll find everything I need and not have to plan my every move – it's exercise!



Con

If I skip reading labels, I am letting the food control me instead of controlling my food. If I don't go in with a game plan, then I may fall victim to the marketing strategies of the supermarket and make uninformed choices.

If you've been a believer in the "What I don't know can't hurt me" mentality, then now is the time to embrace the idea that, "Food, like your money, should be working for you".



No better place to start making your food earn its place in your kitchen than at the grocery store with your newfound knowledge!

And remember, if at any time you have questions about your **CONTRAVE** therapy and would like to speak to a nurse counsellor, call **1-855-CNTRAVE (1-855-268-7283)** from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Friday EST.

CONTRAVE is a prescription medicine that is used for weight management:

- in patients who have obesity or;
- in patients with overweight and at least one medical condition associated with their weight (such as high blood pressure that is controlled with medicine, Type 2 diabetes, or a high amount of lipids (cholesterol or other types of fat) in the blood)

CONTRAVE should be used along with a reduced-calorie diet and increased physical activity.

CONTRAVE should be taken exactly as your Healthcare Professional tells you to.

Please refer to the **Patient Medication Information** insert in your product package for important safety information.

Contrave **Support
program**