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David L. Katz, MD, sorts out the healthy, the harmful, and the hype.

Q: Are there any good granola or breakfast bars out there that will satisfy a snack craving but won't ruin my weight loss efforts?

The answer is yes, but you have to be very picky. Just because it says “granola” on the wrapper doesn't mean it's healthy. Many cereal bars are simple candy in disguise. First, they're loaded with sugar and salt - and strong evidence suggests that when multiple flavor categories such as sweet and salty are combined in a mouthful, they turn on appetite. Second, the grains in many cereal bars are often refined, which means they're stripped of fiber and nutrients. To find a healthy bar, make sure a whole grain (usually oats) is within the first three ingredients. Look for at least two grams of fiber per serving. Avoid any product containing high-fructose corn syrup or partially hydrogenated oil. And choose only those with relatively short ingredient lists that don't include unnatural chemicals. Check out Barbara's Bakery Puffins Cereal & Milk Bars, Kashi Chewy Granola Bars, Nature's Choice Multigrain Cereal Bars, Nature's Path Organic Granola Bars, and Odwalla Nourishing Food Bars. These are among the few bars, in my opinion, that deserve a place in your pantry rather than your trash.

David L. Katz, MD, a professor at Yale University and medical contributor for ABC News, is the author of The Flavor Point Diet (Rodale).