Refined Grains and Packaged Snacks
Breads, muffins, scones, croissants, English muffins, sandwiches, burritos, tacos, corn chips, pancakes, waffles, pasta, pita bread, bagels, danishes, donuts, crackers, cannoli’s, cakes, burger and hot dog buns, pizza, cereals, pop-tarts, cookies, pretzels, chips, breakfast bars, etc.

Refined grains act just like sugar in your body and have little or no nutrients. Refined grains manipulate blood sugar WITHOUT providing good nutrition. In fact, the minerals found in grains are often added after-the-fact (that’s what “fortified” means), and these minerals are poorly absorbed. Grains also have components called “anti-nutrients” that can bind to minerals like zinc, calcium and iron, preventing your body from using them properly. Many foods that claim to contain “whole” grains are actually mostly refined. Gluten-free alternatives are usually refined, also.

Better Alternatives: You may feel the need for a starch, especially after a work-out. This is the time to eat whole-food carbs such as sweet potatoes, yams, rice, quinoa, sprouted grains, beans, legumes, squash, carrots, onions, beets, plus many, many fruits and vegetables. Also, try making baked goods from coconut flour, flax meal, or ground almonds.

Concerns: You may already anticipate that giving-up refined grains will be difficult. The may make up a large part of your diet. Deep down you may know that these foods can be highly addictive. The sugars and the synthetic chemicals can make you continuously crave for more, even though your health could suffer as a result. Try distracting yourself; drink water or go for a walk. Once you conquer the cravings, you’ll feel less and less hooked on junk foods. You can do it!

Your body may undergo a natural detoxification process as you eliminate unhealthy refined foods and chemicals. The whole foods you eat and drinking plenty of water will help this process along.
Refined Foods to Eliminate, cont...

**A Note on Gluten:** Gluten is a protein found in the grains wheat, barley, and rye. According to the book *Wheat Belly*, gluten inflames and damages the gut lining, and is associated with many underlying, chronic conditions both inside and outside the digestive tract – including people who DON’T have celiac disease! Even whole grains contain gluten.

If you have been wondering if you might benefit from a diet without gluten, this is a perfect opportunity for you to try it out! Beware of hidden sources of gluten in many, many products. A real gluten-free challenge is 100% gluten free (no moderation here).

**Refined Sugars**

Sugar, agave nectar, barley malt, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, brown rice syrup, corn sweetener, dextrin, dextrose, fructo-oligosaccarides, fruit juice concentrate, glucose, sucrose, invert sugar, polydextrose, turbinado sugar, and many, many others.

Foods ending in –ol, -ose, and –ide are sugars.

Artificial sugars like Truvia, Splenda, and aspartame, to name a few, often found in diet sodas, are also refined and should be eliminated. Any beverage that contains sugar or refined syrup is a refined carb food.

There are dozens of types of sugar used in processed foods; sometimes several in the same product! Sugar is the epitome of an “empty calorie.” Your body has to expend energy and stored nutrients to process it. Sugar causes dramatic blood sugar spikes and crashes, which can lead to cravings, weight gain, and energy slumps... a recipe for a health disaster!

Hidden sugars are prolific, especially in processed foods. Read ingredient labels for hidden added sugars in sauces, spice packets, condiments, peanut butter, juices, alcohol, fast foods, diet foods, bouillon cubes, hot dogs, lunch meats, canned soups, vitamins, and prepared foods.

**Better Alternatives:** Some natural sugars (to be used sparingly) include: Molasses, real Stevia, raw honey, real maple syrup, and dates.
Refined Fats & Oils
Margarine, shortening, canola/rapeseed oil, vegetable oil, grapeseed oil, sunflower oil, rice bran oil, safflower oil, corn oil, soybean oil, hydrogenated oil, and partially hydrogenated oil (trans fats) have all been refined by an industrial process, which involves chemical extraction and deodorization.

These oils oxidize (degrade) quickly, contain excessive Omega-6 fats which cause inflammation in your body, and are NOT healthy fats! Inflammation causes disease.

Better Alternatives: The most healthy fats and oils have labels stating they are organic, unrefined, extra-virgin, or cold pressed.

Fats for HOT uses include coconut oil and palm oil. Oils such as animal fats, butter, ghee, full-fat dairy, and eggs yolks are healthy options if they are from healthy animals. Animal fats are rich in heart-healthy Omega-3 fats. Fats for WARM/COLD uses include olive oil, sesame oil, nut oils (like macadamia oil), avocados and avocado oil, nuts and seeds, and flax.

Contrary to popular belief, healthy fats will most likely NOT make you gain weight. They help you absorb micronutrients, keep you feeling full longer, and think clearly (your brain is mostly fat).

A Note on Refined Dairy: Most modern dairy is derived from unhealthy, antibiotic-and hormone-supplemented cows; then stripped of all nutrients. You may want to eliminate conventional refined dairy, including milk, cheese, yogurt, cottage cheese, ice cream, and frozen yogurt.

Better Alternatives: Full-fat & Organic dairy is better. Grass-fed is best. Kerrygold is a common brand of grass-fed butter, which is rich in the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, and K.
Refined Foods to Eliminate, cont...

Refined Table Salt
The white table salt that we commonly use is refined and processed removing trace minerals. After this salt is refined, several chemicals are added, including aluminum, ammonium, and ferrocyanide to minimize caking together of the salt and extend shelf life.

Better Alternatives: Unrefined Himalayan and natural sea salts are very different because they still have all of their lovely minerals from the sea. According to Colin Champ, MD, who wrote a series on the importance of salt and its trace minerals, there are studies that suggest increased (unrefined) salt intake (which contains potassium and magnesium) may actually lower blood pressure.

What about Alcoholic Drinks? Technically, yes, beer and wine are refined. Some are more sugary than others. Some, like dark red wines, have healthy properties. To keep your sanity, enjoy your favorite drinks. The pursuit of health is meant to be a positive experience. Perhaps cut down to one drink per day, if needed.

Overall, Remember this General Rule of Thumb:
If you wonder if a food is refined... it probably IS!

You may have noticed that many of the foods that you thought were healthy are actually refined foods. These might include foods labeled “lite”, “fat-free”, “low in saturated fat”, “with real whole grains”, “heart healthy”, “fortified”, “all natural” and other slick (and unregulated) marketing techniques.

What the labels should say: “Loaded with Chemicals”, “Full of Disguised Sugar”, “Engineered so You’ll Become Addicted to This”, or “We Care More about Our Profits than Your Health”.

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