

Ask Leyla: Are protein bars a healthy meal replacement?



Q: I see protein bars and meal replacement bars advertised everywhere, but I've always wondered if they're really "good" for you.

What do you think of protein bars? Are they a healthy snack or meal replacement?

A: My biggest pet peeve with protein bars is they are all sweet, not savory. For example, is there such a thing as a chicken soup flavored bar, or an eggplant and garlic or tomato and basil flavored protein bar? No. And for the record, I'm talking strictly protein bars here, not natural jerky, beef pemmican or other snack or meal replacement alternatives. ✖

Protein bars are more or less equated with "snack" bars. Indeed, most of them are simply candy bars with added protein—and all the calories to boot! Whether, it's honey, organic evaporated cane juice, date paste or brown rice syrup, *it's still sugar*. And because it's sweet, it will cause a rise in blood sugar and subsequently insulin.

Moreover, the protein in the bar will not temper the rise in blood glucose that much—especially in the presence of sweeteners. While most protein bars contain some type of sugar or sugar substitute, many low-carb versions are sweetened with sugar alcohols—which is fine until you pass the threshold for tolerance—which is typically 20 grams per day for most people. You'll know it if you experience bloating and gas followed by bowel urgency and/or straight on diarrhea.

A good substitute for protein bars is nuts and seeds. It's Nature's original functional food—and portable too! Carry around an ounce or two in your purse, briefcase or backpack when you're on the go so you can nibble when you're hungry or to tide you over to the next meal.

If nuts and seeds aren't an option for you due to allergy or other reasons, natural jerky or pemmican is a tasty and nutritious choice.

To your health!

As you may know, I've been doing a weekly "Q&A with Leyla" podcast feature with Dr. Hoffman. Now you can get my perspective and expertise every Friday on my own episode of the *Intelligent Medicine* Podcast. If you missed last week's, you can [listen here](#). To be sure you don't miss out on any of my important insights and information, **subscribe today!**