

Energy bars have been around since at least the 1970s, when a spin-off of the energy sticks astronauts ate was created for the public, but it wasn't until about a decade ago that the category exploded. Now, **dozens of varieties fill store shelves**, in every flavour and nutritional configuration imaginable.

Molly Morgan, a registered dietitian and author of *The Skinny Rules*, cites three reasons for the immense popularity of energy bars: portability, convenience and their ability to offer the diet trend *du jour*, whether that's **low-carb, high-protein or nutrient-rich**. "Whatever's the hot thing, energy bars can deliver that," Morgan says.

But are they good for you? That all depends on how you're using them. "They could fit into any eating pattern, but they are a calorie-dense food, so **be mindful of how much you're consuming** when you have one," Morgan says.

And **the perfect liquid complement?** It may be tempting to reach for an enhanced water that promises health benefits beyond hydration, but beware: Along with the added vitamins, herbs and electrolytes often come added sweeteners. Plus, says Morgan, "In many cases, you may be paying for added nutrients that your body doesn't need."

Still, a flavoured water every once in a while, particularly when you're on the go, isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially if it gets you to hydrate more than you might with plain old H₂O. **Just be sure to pay attention to the label** and look for drinks flavoured naturally.

Whether you're scaling a mountain or just running around town, here are the best options.

THE BAR CODE

If you're on a long flight or sightseeing without a chance to grab lunch, you want a ...

MEAL REPLACEMENT

Look for: Roughly 200 calories, 5 to 10 grams of protein and at least 2 grams of fibre

Try: Lärabar or Luna varieties

Setting the Bar

{ FITNESS }

Whatever your preferred adventure, fuel up for it with these guidelines for smart snack packing and healthy hydration.

By Haley Shapley | Photography by Mark Wagoner



If you're on a leisurely stroll or a Segway tour, you want a ...

SNACK

Look for: Roughly 100 to 150 calories and at least 2 grams of fibre

Try: Kashi TLC Chewy Granola Bar or Cascadian Farm Organic Dark Chocolate Almond Chewy Granola Bar or MuleBar Energy Bar MegaBite in Liqueurice

If you're bicycling or otherwise on the move, you want ...

ENERGY

Look for: Roughly 200 to 250 calories and 10 grams of protein

Try: Clif Mojo or Honey Stinger Energy Bar or Trek Bar

If you're taking part in intense athletic training, you want ...

MUSCLE-BUILDING

Look for: Roughly 200 to 300 calories and 20-plus grams of protein

Try: PowerBar ProteinPlus or Met-Rx Protein Plus Bar or Winners Gym Mega Protein Bar

FIRSTS FOR THIRST

If you want something a bit more interesting than plain water ...

Try Metromint or Carpe Diem

Botanic Water: Metromint water comes in flavours including peppermint, orange mint and chocolate mint. Carpe Diem is flavoured naturally with plant extracts such as lavender.

If you'd like the fizz and flavour of soda without the additives ...

Try Fizzy Lizzy or Izze: The sugars in Fizzy Lizzy drinks come from fruit juice, so you don't have to worry about additives. In varieties like blackberry and clementine, Izze's sparkling juice is free of refined sugar, high-fructose corn syrup and artificial flavours.

If you prefer to stick to the classics ...

Try Perrier: Plain Perrier and the flavoured varieties will give you a small boost of calcium and potassium without calories. **AS**

Haley Shapley, based in Seattle, once taste-tested 30 energy bars in the span of a few hours, a feat she hopes never to repeat.