



Don't believe it!

GOOD MARKETING MAY NOT MEAN GOOD FOR YOU. PROTECT YOURSELF FROM . . .

100-calorie snack packs

Leave them on the shelf. According to a recent study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the small portions lull us into thinking that a little bit of unhealthy food is an innocent pleasure, which encourages us to eat more bags. "Just because it's packaged to look like diet food doesn't mean it is," says New York University nutritionist Lisa R. Young, Ph.D., R.D., author of *The Portion Teller Plan*. She says you're better off dipping into a regular-size bag—a reminder of what overindulgence looks like.

Credit balance by phone

This convenience, hyped in an ad with the song "I Want It All," hardly helps you spend responsibly. Consumers view their "available balance" as cash they're free to spend, a 2008 *Journal of Consumer Research* study shows. So rein in your spending by using cash; that way you're able to see your money physically disappear. Carnegie Mellon researchers found that spending money activates the pain centers in shoppers' brains. "Taking less cash out of an ATM more often is better than taking out more cash less often," says study coauthor Scott Rick, Ph.D.

"Whole" food labels

Whole grains have more fiber, protein, vitamins, and certain minerals than processed white flour has—but food companies sometimes use the phrase "whole grain" more often than they actually use whole grains. (Sara Lee acknowledged last year that its Soft & Smooth Made with Whole Grain White bread was skimpy on the good stuff.) Pay attention to the ingredient list, not the packaging. "You don't want sucrose, high-fructose corn syrup, or enriched wheat flour listed ahead of the whole grains," Young says.

Fast-food salads

Salads drive up sales of fattier fast-food fare, says Duke University's Gavan Fitzsimons, Ph.D., who has studied the trend. "Seeing a salad satisfies a person's unconscious goal of being healthy," he says. "People feel better with them on the menu, and then go wild on the fries." Salads aren't always healthy, either: McDonald's Premium Southwest Salad with Grilled Chicken and Newman's Own Creamy Southwest Dressing has more calories than a Quarter Pounder. If you must go, know what you're ordering.

Reusable grocery bags

They're good—but you have to use them, and many shoppers don't, a Stanford University survey found. If the bags are not reused, they're actually worse for the environment, because their sturdy material can last longer than disposable plastic bags. A main problem: Store logos emblazoned on reusable bags make people uncomfortable taking them into other stores, according to the survey. Buy a nondescript bag (we like the canvas styles at reusablebags.com) and keep it in your car or near your keys.

You can find more analyses of fast food and other fare at MensHealth.com/eatthis.

UNLEASH YOUR POTENTIAL

POP QUIZ

Can you match your music to the skills it prepared you for?

If you've ever . . .

- 1 Scoffed at disco
- 2 Played the guitar
- 3 Rocked out to Slayer

Then you're able to . . .

- A Solve work problems
- B Dump your girlfriend
- C Perform CPR

Answers

- 1: C The Bee Gees' "Stayin' Alive" has 103 beats a minute, nearly the exact frequency at which you're supposed to push while performing CPR. Hum along, save a life.
- 2: A Musicians use both sides of their brains, say Vanderbilt University researchers. That makes them better at "divergent thinking," a process that lets them develop new solutions to open-ended questions. Just don't serenade your boss.
- 3: B Listening to angry music can regulate your emotions and better prepare you for conflict, a 2008 study in *Psychological Science* found. G.W.A.R. has some great breakup tunes.



Melt ears, break hearts.

From top: Kevin Van Aelst; Gary Wostenholme/Getty Images