5 Tips to Make Healthful Food Choices
When Choosing Packaged Foods

1. Don't be fooled by the words and pictures on the front of a food package.
The front of the package is like an ad to convince you to buy the food product. Look instead for the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list.

2. Check the first ingredient on the list.
By law, ingredients appear in order based on their relative amounts in a food product. The FIRST ingredient is the one present in the greatest amount by weight. The SECOND ingredient is the one in the next-largest amount, and so on. Are the FIRST and SECOND ingredients good for you? If not, choose other foods that are better for your health.

3. Watch out for ingredients that don’t belong.
   - Too much salt (sodium) in foods that don’t need to taste salty, such as cereals or desserts
   - Sugar added to foods that don’t need to be sweet, such as tomato sauce or salad dressing
   - Sugar added to fruits, which are already naturally sweet!
   - Sugar under several names (such as corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, corn sweetener, corn sugar, confectioner’s sugar, brown sugar, maple syrup, honey, molasses, sucrose, fructose, dextrose, or maltose)
   - Trans fat (partially hydrogenated oil) that can raise cholesterol levels and promote heart disease
   - Chemical names you can’t pronounce (however, sometimes the chemical names of vitamins are listed as ingredients, and that’s OK!)
   - Artificial colors, dyes, or flavors

4. Choose foods with a short ingredient list.
Long lists may include things that your body doesn’t need, such as artificial flavors and dyes, or preservatives. In general, foods with shorter lists tend to be more wholesome and have more natural ingredients. Fresh fruits and vegetables have the shortest list! They’re natural foods packed with good nutrients, and they have just one ingredient! The package is just the skin or the peel.

5. Choose grain products with at least 2 grams of fiber per serving.
Products made from grains include breads, crackers, cereals, cereal bars, snack bars, corn chips, and cooked grains such as rice. Whole grain foods provide fiber, while refined grain foods provide little or no fiber. Fiber is good for your body. It helps move food through your digestive system and helps keep your stomach full. When you eat a meal that’s high in fiber, you stay full longer.