

# behindthe news

## The healthiest ploy

Are you being duped into thinking food products are 'healthy' due to sneaky marketing techniques? If so, how are these companies getting away with it?



**W**hen you see words like 'natural', 'healthy', and 'fresh' on products at the supermarket, you think they're good choices, right? *Choice* magazine recently looked at more than 200 products whose brand names imply naturalness and healthiness and reported that "many of them don't live up to the promise."

It found almost half of these products were high in total fat, saturated fat, sugars or sodium.

For example, the All Natural Bakery almond and apple oat slice has a gigantic 12.3g saturated fat, which is half of the recommended upper limit for the day! And, the Natural Cordial Company's lime cordial in fact contains a not-so-natural sulphite preservative.

So how do they get away with this? Food labelling laws in Australia are very strict about nutrition claims that may be made - to make claims like 'high in fibre',



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'low in fat' or 'lowers cholesterol absorption', specific nutrition criteria must be met.

However, manufacturers are finding a loophole by including the magic adjectives 'pure', 'fresh' and 'natural' in the trademarked brand name. This

isn't governed by the same law. *Choice* argues "anything that promises to be nutritious is far more likely to find its way into your shopping trolley than something that's not", so it's a conscious decision by companies to form an illusion of their product being good for us.

It's a tactic that must be working, too. There are now almost 1300 products and brands that use the word 'natural' in their product name or package marketing, according to The George Institute for Global Health. It's unfortunate those with misleading brand names muddy the water for the companies honestly making healthy products.

Ultimately, it's up to us to look a little closer at the packaging if we want to make the best choices for ourselves and for our family.

Pick up the box, turn it over and read the nutrition information panel and ingredients list closely. Better still, try to minimise the number of foods you eat that come from a packet altogether - the more fresh foods you eat, the less likely you are to be misled. [hfg](http://hfg.org)