



# EATING 101 RU DINING HEALTHY?



A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE RU HEALTHY DINING TEAM  
A Joint Program Between RU Dining Services and The New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health

## The Health Halo Effect

Have you ever ordered an all-natural cookie or organic ice cream because you were trying to be healthy? If so, you may have fallen for the health halo effect. The health halo effect can be defined as the perception of a food item as *being healthier than is actually is*, based on virtuous attributes promoted by food labels and media messaging. This cognitive bias may lead individuals to consume foods with lower nutritional value, and possibly pay more for them. Read below to find the truth behind some common health halo traps.

### Organic

#### Health Claim:

Organic foods are free from hormones, antibiotics and pesticides

#### Health Halo Trap:

Organic foods have not been shown to be more nutritious than conventionally farmed foods, even though they can be more expensive.

### All-Natural

#### Health Claim:

Product ingredients are supposedly from natural sources

#### Health Halo Trap:

The FDA has not defined the term "natural" so almost any product can be labeled natural. Therefore, an "all-natural" food may be no healthier than it's alternative.

### Gluten-Free

#### Health Claim:

Gluten-Free foods are free from gluten

#### Health Halo Trap:

For most, consuming gluten is perfectly healthy. For people without Celiac disease or other related conditions, there is no benefit to eating gluten-free.

### Vegan

#### Health Claim:

Vegan foods are made without any animal products

#### Health Halo Trap:

Vegan foods are free from animal products, but they are not guaranteed to be healthy. Vegan cookies are still cookies, and should be enjoyed in moderation.

## Say Halo and Goodbye to Unhealthy Food Traps

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References: <https://www.gundersenhealth.org/health-wellness/eat/health-halos-what-they-are-and-why-you-need-to-avoid-them/> Accessed on Feb. 4, 2021. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0950329319305452?via%3Dihub> Accessed on Feb. 4, 2021. <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition/use-term-natural-food-labeling> Accessed on Feb. 4, 2021. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0195666318315253> Accessed on Feb. 4, 2021.

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