Cereal Box Claims

Many cereal boxes feature claims such as the ones displayed below. While these claims are legal and highlight cherry-picked nutrients, they can also be misleading; you should always look closely at the nutrition facts and ingredients before choosing a cereal for your family. In general, your best approach should be to ignore the front of the box and just focus on the nutrition fact panel. Learn more about reading a cereal nutrition fact panel. The examples below are not all currently on the shelves (as packaging changes frequently), but as the old saying goes, ‘fool me once shame on you, fool me twice, shame on me’. Don’t be fooled; know the facts.

Visit cerealfacts.org for more facts & tips for picking healthier cereals that kids will eat!

The amount of vitamin D is the minimum amount that most fortified cereals provide. This amount of vitamin D does not balance out the 15g of sugar per serving – over 50% by weight! In fact, a form of sugar is the first, third and forth ingredient listed on the nutrition panel.

This cereal has a Nutrition Profiling Index* score of 46.

True, there is no high fructose corn syrup, but it is still 40% sugar, and one serving packs 12g of sugar! In fact, sugar is the first ingredient listed on the nutrition panel.

This cereal has a Nutrition Profiling Index* score of 44.

*The Nutrition Profiling Index score is a reflection of the overall nutrition of a cereal based on its total calories and the mix of healthy and unhealthy ingredients. A score above 62 is healthy.
The claim of ‘more whole grain than any other ingredient’ is true, but check out all the sources of sugar (which are listed separately): marshmallows, sugar, corn syrup, and dextrose. A total of 10 grams!

This cereal has a Nutrition Profiling Index* score of 36.

Although this claim has been removed from Cocoa Krispies, they tried to fool us. At 25% of the recommended daily value of these vitamins, it is a weak substitute for healthy eating. More to the point, it has 12 grams of sugar as well as bad fats (partially hydrogenated oils).

This cereal has a Nutrition Profiling Index* score of 40.

Sure it has fiber – 3 grams -- but it packs a punch in terms of sugar—the same as 3 teaspoons in one serving; in fact, sugar is the first ingredient (43% of the cereal).

This cereal has a Nutrition Profiling Index* score of 40.

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