

Can 'organic' labels backfire?

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Could organic labels lead you to overeat? These labels certainly appear to make people think their organic snack has a lot fewer calories than it really does.

These findings were presented at this week's Experimental Biology conference in Anaheim, Calif. They showed that people who ate organic cookies labeled as "organic" believed that their snack contained 40% fewer calories than the same cookies that had no label, according to Jenny Wan-Chen Lee, a graduate student with the Cornell [Food](#) and Brand Lab.

"An organic label gives a food a 'health halo,' said coauthor, Brian Wansink, Cornell professor and author of the book, *Marketing Nutrition*. It's the same basic reason people tend to overeat any [snack food](#) that's labeled as healthy or low fat. They underestimate the calories and over-reward themselves by eating more."

The study even identified two personality types most likely to make these low estimates— people who claim to "usually buy organic foods," and those who typically read labels for [nutritional information](#).

What if you don't want to overeat an organic food?

"Take your best guess at its calorie count. Then double it. You'll end up being more accurate, and you'll probably eat a lot less," explained Wansink.

Provided by Cornell University

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