

New Report Reveals Hidden Contaminants in Popular Snack and Nutrition Bars

Study Continues to Sound the Alarm Over Product Purity and Labeling Gaps

DENVER, CO, UNITED STATES, May 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the heels of a [nationwide study](#) on the levels of heavy metals in America's best-selling store-bought rice, a new report released today by the [Clean Label Project](#) uncovers alarming levels of contaminants—ranging from heavy metals and pesticides to industrial chemicals like BPA and phthalates—in some of the most popular snack and nutrition bars on the market. Based on testing of 165 top-selling bars from 50 leading brands, the [Snack and Nutrition Bar Category Insights Report](#) offers the most comprehensive look yet at what athletes, fitness enthusiasts, and those seeking convenient and healthy on- the-go snacking options are really eating—and what's left off the label.



Among the most concerning findings:

- 100% of products tested had detectable levels of heavy metals, with 22% exceeding California's Prop 65 limits for lead and 6% for cadmium.
- Certified-organic bars, on average, had 28% more heavy metals and 6% of organic certified bars (3 of 51 organic bars tested) tested high in pesticides banned from organic products.
- Products marketed as "Gluten-Free," "Non-GMO," "Vegan," "Soy-Free," and "Dairy-Free," on average, consistently tested higher in heavy metals.

- 97% of products were above the previous limits for Prop 65 limits for acrylamide, a chemical linked to cancer. In May, 2025, there was a federal landmark court decision to block cancer warnings for Acrylamide under California Prop 65.

- In a positive finding, bars labeled “Kids”, on average, had significantly lower levels of heavy metals, pesticides, and phthalates than their adult counterparts.

“This study highlights a growing truth: our current food safety regulations simply don’t go far enough to protect all consumers from the hidden risks of today’s industrial food system,” said Jaclyn Bowen, executive director of Clean Label Project. “We’re seeing widespread contamination—from heavy metals and pesticide residues to chemicals migrating from packaging—yet much of it remains unregulated or overlooked. While overdue reforms are finally starting to protect our most vulnerable populations, like infants and children, it’s high time we acknowledge the broader, pervasive contamination issue.”

The report is based on over 20,000 laboratory tests conducted in partnership with Ellipse Analytics, an ISO-accredited analytical chemistry lab. Contaminants tested include arsenic, cadmium, lead, mercury, BPA/BPS, phthalates, acrylamide, and over 400 pesticides.

Despite the lack of federal regulation on many of these contaminants, states like California and Maryland are beginning to advance food safety laws—starting with baby food. This report aims to expand that conversation to the broader food market, particularly products marketed as nutritious or wellness-oriented.

“Snack and nutrition bars are a \$7.4 billion category in the U.S., consumed daily by people aiming to eat healthier,” said Bowen. “But health isn’t just calories or macros—it’s also about contamination. We’re urging brands, retailers, and regulators to make this new frontier of food safety a core part of product development. Nutritious foods start with clean ingredients, which come from healthy soil and water—made possible by strong environmental and food safety policy. A healthier future depends on more than labels—it requires transforming the system behind them.”

A full list of Clean Label Project certified products can be found at www.cleanlabelproject.org.

About the Clean Label Project

The Clean Label Project is a national nonprofit with a mission to bring truth and transparency to food and consumer product labeling. Using data and science, CLP tests for environmental and industrial contaminants in everyday products to protect public health and redefine what “clean” really means.

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