

## Lesson 8 *The Biggest Loser*

# **Food Labels --- Information for Healthier Choices**

*The Biggest Loser* is not about following a strict diet, eating strange foods, or depriving yourself of favorite foods, but rather it's about making wise food choices that promote lifelong health and fitness. You have learned about some resources to use in making wise choices - MyPyramid, the Plate Method for meal planning, and food portions.

Another resource available to you is the facts provided on the food label. The current food labeling law has been in effect since May 1994. Since that time, several amendments have been made regarding labeling for new health claims about disease prevention. In 2006, labels were amended to include information on grams of trans fat, and foods which may cause allergies.

**What's on the front?** The front of the food package is designed to catch your attention. It includes the brand, product name, picture of a *true representation of the food*, and weight of the food. Prior to May 1994, packages could use all kinds of "magnets" or "catch phrases" to encourage you to buy their product. Some of the information was confusing, especially about health claims or nutrients that the food did or did not contain.

Any descriptor of the food used on the front of the package has standard definitions required by law. Consumers can use the claims as a quick guide to compare products. An example of a nutrient claim is "good source of fiber". If the label makes this claim about fiber, the food must provide 10 to 19% of the Daily Value for fiber which would be 2.5 to 4.75 grams. The law has definitions for 27 descriptors about fiber, sodium, fat, calories, cholesterol, etc.

Authorized **Health Claims** have been approved for food labels to give information on the relationship between a nutrient or food and the risk of a disease. To make a health claim, the food must contain a defined amount of the nutrient. The claim must also make it clear that other factors may affect development of a disease.

Go to [www.cfsan.fda.gov/label](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/label) for a complete listing of approved health claims. Some examples of health claims commonly found on food labels are:

- ♥ Along with eating a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, fiber may help reduce blood cholesterol levels and the risk for developing heart disease.
- ♥ Calcium may help reduce risk of osteoporosis.
- ♥ A low-fat diet may help reduce the risk of developing some types of cancer.
- ♥ Diets high in fruits and vegetables and low in fat may help reduce risk for developing some types of cancer.
- ♥ Diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol may lower blood cholesterol and reduce risk for developing heart disease.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size: (95g)	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 182	Cal. from Fat 23
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 3g	<b>4%</b>
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>2%</b>
Trans Fats 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 6mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 36g	<b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber 3g	<b>10%</b>
Sugars 8g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 15%
Calcium 4%	Iron 10%
* Percent Daily Values is based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2400mg 2400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

**What's on the back?** The back of the food label provides details to help you make comparisons of the nutrients in similar foods. This part of the label is called the **Nutrition Facts Panel (NFP)**.

**Servings:** The top of the label has information on serving size, number of servings, and calories per serving. The serving size is the basis for comparing the nutrients between foods. Prior to 1994, there was no consistency of serving sizes on labels so it was hard to compare nutrients between 2 or more products. (Refer to Week 5 lesson for a refresher on serving sizes.)

**Required Nutrients:** Next on the NFP is a list of *nutrients per serving in grams or milligrams*. The required nutrients are fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, dietary fiber, sugar and protein. Listed to the right of the nutrient is the % Daily Value which gives the percentage of that nutrient compared to the average daily diet for an individual consuming 2000 calories per day.

**Key Vitamins and Minerals:** Below the required nutrients is a section that gives the percent of daily recommendations for 4 key vitamins and minerals – vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron. Based on research of the most critical vitamins and minerals for health and disease prevention, these 4 were chosen to be included on the NFP. They are

included on all labels unless the product package is too small. Additional nutrients may be listed depending on the product. For example, fruits and vegetables may include information on additional vitamins and minerals in those food; dairy products will include information on calcium and vitamin D.

**Percent Daily Value:** Located toward the bottom of the NFP, this gives information on how much a particular food contributes to nutrients in your daily diet based on the 2,000 calorie diet. The %DV helps you determine if a serving of food is high or low in a nutrient.

**Ingredients:** All ingredients in a food must be listed on the label. Ingredients are listed in order by weight of the food with the food weighing most listed first and other foods listed in descending order. Specific ingredient information is also included such as the source for protein or starches. This allows people to avoid substances due to allergies, sensitivity, or for religious or cultural reasons. Beverages that claim juice as an ingredient must list the percentage of juice in the formulation. Juice percentage will appear on the label directly above the Nutrition Facts Panel.

**Allergens:** Since 2006, labels must state in plain English the presence of the 8 major food proteins that account for 90% of documented allergic reactions. These are milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, or soybeans. These may be in the list of ingredients or printed in bold below the ingredients (i.e. **Contains: Peanuts, Eggs**).

#### References:

Understanding the Food Label, Colorado State University Extension Fact Sheet 9.365, [www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs](http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs)

What's on a Food Label?, Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, [www.oznet.ksu.edu/library](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu/library)

Food labels Identify Allergens More Clearly, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

Food Labeling and Nutrition, [www.cfsan.fda.gov/label](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/label)

A *Healthier Weigh*, CSU Extension, Logan and Morgan counties and Golden Plains Area