

Label Reading – Getting More Nutritional Bang for your Buck!

Who: Adults and parents of infants age 6 -12 months and children 1 – 5 years of age

Why: Help families get the most nutritional bang for their bucks spent on food

Time: 20 minutes

Objectives: By the end of this session, participants will:

- Identify the two main sections of a Nutrition Facts Label
- Identify the key areas to review when food shopping/comparing
- Identify how to make the healthiest choices when selecting foods
- Understand upcoming Label changes – When to expect

Lesson

- Overview:**
1. Introduction
 2. Concept: Different sections of food label
 3. Concept: Key sections of label to view/assess
 4. Concept: How to interpret to make healthiest food choices
 5. Closing
 6. (optional) Understanding New Label Changes – When to expect

Materials: Lesson Support Printout

Handouts:

“Lesson Support Handout” (Reuse/laminate)

“Food Facts: New & Improved Nutrition Facts Label” (Eng/Span)

“Key Changes: New & Improved Nutrition Facts Label.” (Eng/Span)

Introduction

- Arrange chairs in a semi-circle before participants enter classroom (when able)
- Distribute Handout: “Lesson Support Handout” (Reuse/laminate)
- Welcome Participants
- Give overview of class session
- Introductions (make sure to include children in the introductions activity)

Example: “Good morning/afternoon everybody! Welcome to Reading Labels - 'Getting more Nutritional Bang for Your Buck'. This class talks about the importance of label reading and how to interpret them. The class is about 20 minutes long and we will use this time to share some ideas. Let's introduce ourselves. I'll start: my name is _____”

👋 If preferred another icebreaker can be used



TIP: Use introductions as an icebreaker. Throw a silly question out there as part of introductions that is not related to the subject that you will be talking about. People will laugh and relax and this will increase class participation. Some examples of questions you can use are: “If money was not an issue, what kind of car would you drive?”, “If money was not an issue and you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?”, “If you could go out with any celebrity for your birthday, who would you pick?”

Concept: Different components of a food label

- **Essential Question:**
 - “How many of you read Nutrition Fact Labels when you're shopping for food?”
- **Affirm answers from participants (i.e. “yes”, “that is pretty common”, “that’s a good one”, etc.)**
- **Lesson Opener:**
 - Today's lesson is learning how to understand the Nutrition Facts Label so that you can get the best 'Nutritional Bang for your Buck'.
 - At the end of today's lesson, (time permitting) we'll also to a brief overview of new labeling laws, changes to label and when to expect.
- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout – pg. 1**
 - **Key Points:**
 - **There are two primary sections of Nutrition Fact Label (NFL)**
 - **Top:** Always included on processed food
 - Format may be different based on product size
 - **“Bottom:** Called the 'Footnote'. Is not always included with top section
 - Content always the same



FACTS ABOUT LABEL SECTIONS:

The top section of a label will provide the same categories of information, but the nutritional information for each food product will always be different as it is specific to each food product. The bottom or footnote section is always the same for each food product, but not always included as inclusion is usually based on package size and room for label.

Concept: Key sections of label to view/assess

- **Lead Questions:**
 - “What is the first thing that you usually look for (check) when reading a label? Why?”
- **Listen and affirm participant’s answers**
 - “What do you think is the most important thing to check first?”
 - **Answer:** Servings and Serving Size
- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout (pg. 1)**
- **Key Points:**
 - At the very top of the label you'll find the *Serving Size* and/or *Servings Per Container*
 - Usually both the 'Serving Size' and 'Servings Per Container' are on the label, sometimes there is only one
 - This can get kind of tricky if it's only the serving size as there may be more than one serving in the container.
 - Look at the sample label of *Macaroni and Cheese*...
 - **Question:** If you were to cook and eat the whole box of the mac-n-cheese... how many calories have you consumed? (pause for them to check handout)
 - **Answer:** Total servings per pkg. is (2) so **500 calories** is correct answer

- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout (pg. 2)**

- **Key Points:**

- When options for snacks are limited (either by available options or \$\$) using labels will help you in selecting healthier options for your \$\$.
- If you look just at the calories - you may miss that the food (or drink) item has more than one serving
- Not uncommon for foods most would consider 'single serving'!
- **EXAMPLE:** Common go-to snack for many people/kids - Chips-n-Soda
 - Look at the label for the 20oz bottle of soda. This is the common serving size found in most vending machines/convenience stores.
 - Look at the "Serving Size and Servings per Container"... this drink is not just a single serving.
 - Some manufacturers are voluntarily making 'Serving Size' as the whole product, so 'Servings per container' is only one.
 - Look at the label for a common snack bag of chips.
 - If you just look at calories, you'll think you're eating 150 calories; but if you check the serving section... you see a serving is 1oz (sometimes they'll tell you roughly how many chips)
 - If there's not a 'Servings per Container', then you need to check the amount "net weight" of package.
 - If the snack bag of chips is 1.75oz... eating that whole 'snack' bag is almost double the 150 calories!!
 - If you'd grabbed this soda and a bag of chips for a snack, you may have unknowingly consumed around 538 calories... and although cheap, there is almost no nutrition and a LOT of calories!
 - = **very poor nutritional bang for your buck!!**

- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout (pg. 3)**

- Here (in yellow) is a healthier option for a snack that you could select.
- By looking at your labels, you've now selected items that provide...
 - NO fat
 - LESS Sodium
 - Almost NO Sugar
 - Some added Vitamins
- Still not the best snack, but a definite improvement over the first!
- Third option (in green) would be the best and most nutritious.
 - Plan ahead or easy to make at home
 - = **'better' nutrition bang for your buck**



FACTS ABOUT SERVING SIZE

No matter the package size, always check this first. The size and/or number of servings given on the food package directly influence the number of calories and all the nutrient amounts listed. Even when food item is sold as, (or assumed to be, personal (single) serving size, remember to check servings per package. You'll be surprised!

- **Lead Question:**
 - “What do you think is the next important fact to check?”
- **Listen and affirm participants answers**
 - **Answer:** Calories and Calories from Fat
- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout (pg. 4)**
- **Key Points:**
 - Calories listed on a label are most often for a single serving
 - Single packaged foods (drinks, snacks, microwave foods, etc) often have more than one serving.
 - Labels are changing, some now provide the nutrition facts per container (Chips & Soda example) or in a dual label listing seen here. Includes both single and the total servings 'per container'.
 - Calories from 'total' fat are commonly listed next to Calories, but not always depending on food product (i.e. - on Mac-n-Cheese label, but not dual serving example).
 - This feature can help you easily see how much of total calories are coming from Fat source.
 - The American diet is usually not lacking in fat. Labels are only required to list less healthy fats. Healthier fats are usually only listed when product is marketed as better for you or making a claim 'good source' of healthier fats.
 - Some food is marketed specifically as 'snack/single' serving; calories are usually prominent on packaging.
 - *General Guide to Calories for adults and older children is...*
 - **40 = Calories low; 100 = moderate; 400 = high**
 - Helps you ballpark a single serving of an item; this is most helpful with elective calories such as snacks, drinks, etc.
 - This general guideline is behind the explosion of “100 calorie” snacks
 - **The food label information is designed for general healthy population - 4 years old and up.**
 - **Easy calorie guideline for children under 4 is half of an adult serving**
 - Depending on their activity level, this can range from 1,000 to 1,400 calories a day.
 - See <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplate-daily-checklist-preschoolers> for printable guides and charts.



FACTS ABOUT CALORIES & CALORIES FROM FAT

Most Food Labels provide information for only a single serving – so always remember to check serving # and size so you don't underestimate your calories and any nutrients you're trying to limit. Some labels provide both the single serving and total servings. Examples: some drinks, snack foods, 'personal/single serving' products.

- **Lead Questions:**
 - “What is the next thing that you usually look for (check) when reading a label?”
- **Listen and affirm participants answers**

- **Answer:** Nutrients in food item
- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout (pg. 5)**
- **Key Points:**
 - The body of each label has **Three primary areas** - required information
 - Nutrients that need to be watched/limited (Yellow area)
 - Nutrients that need to be looked for/maximized (Blue area)
 - Daily Values (%DV)
 - **LIMIT** - Consists of Total Fat, and at least two other required fats that will impact your health.
 - **Saturated Fat** - solid at room temp. - usually from non-plant sources
 - **Trans Fat** - cheap/shelf stable - still common in processed foods
 - Not naturally occurring - usually result of manufacturing - taking plant (liquid/good) fat and making solid and more shelf stable
 - **Cholesterol** - prevalent in Standard American Diet (SAD)
 - **GET ENOUGH** - These are the Vitamins/Minerals, food components that have significant impact on development and health.
 - Many are same emphasized in WIC
 - **DAILY VALUES (%DV)** - They are a general 'quick reference' guide as to the "BANG or the BUST" of the nutritional value of product being purchased.
 - **5% or less is LOW**
 - **20% or more is HIGH**
 - Based on a 2,000 calorie diet for average/healthy adult and children 4 years and older (see footnote section).
 - **There are different DVs (nutrition) requirements for pregnant or breastfeeding women and preschool children.**
 - See <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/audience> for printable guides and charts
 - **Blank %DV's** - Trans Fat, Total Sugars, and Protein
 - **Trans Fat** - Do not have established %DV; keep low
 - **Sugars** - Same as Trans Fat
 - **Protein** - %DV only required if claim is made for protein content (ie) "High in Protein". Otherwise, unless product is marketed for use by infants or children under 4 years of age, none is needed.
 - Protein intake is not a public health concern in American Diet.



FACTS ABOUT NUTRIENTS & HOW MUCH

Remember that food labels list two primary categories of nutrients that are required to be listed:

- Those you want/need to limit AND those you need to get enough of.

Carbohydrates and Fats both have subcomponents listed that are very important. They let you know what the 'Total Fat' and 'Total Carbohydrates' are made up of.

Concept: How to interpret to make healthiest food choices

- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout (pg. 6)**

- **Key Points:**

- There is one last thing that is important to know when trying to select the best nutritional option for price...
 - Understanding added sugars and how to read the ingredients.
- Under Total Carbohydrates - you'll always see 'Sugars' and 'Dietary Fiber'
- **Fiber:** Important for good digestive health
- **Sugars:** include naturally occurring as well as added sugars
- **EXAMPLE:** Look at the two yogurt labels
 - There is a big difference in amount of sugar in each.
 - To figure out how much is from natural and how much is from added sugars, you need to refer to ingredients to determine source.
 - Ingredients are listed in descending order of weight/amount
 - First ingredient is the most - last is the least amount in food item
 - NOTE: in the fruit yogurt you have 44g of sugar compared to only 10g of sugar in the plain yogurt.
 - Some of this is naturally occurring (milk and apples)
 - Fruit Yogurt also has added sugar as 3rd ingredient (High Fructose Corn Syrup). This means that a lot of the 44g of sugar is coming from this as it's the third ingredient listed.
 - Better to find a fruit yogurt with less sugar and ideally have any added sugars closer to the END (or at least further down) the ingredient list.
 - Other commonly added sugars are
 - corn syrup and high-fructose corn syrup
 - maltose, dextrose, and sucrose
 - fruit juice concentrate, honey, and maple syrup
 - Best option, to add fresh fruit and some yummy spices to plain yogurt.

Closing

- Distribute Handouts: "Food Facts: New & Improved Nutrition Facts Label" (Eng/ Span)
"Key Changes: New & Improved Nutrition Facts Labe." (Eng/ Span)
 - As you are handing out the take-home handouts, briefly let them know that new labeling laws have gone into effect and that they may start seeing different versions of food labels. Handouts will explain what's changing and why.
 - Nice key change is that added sugars will now be listed!
- Thank participants for their participation
 - Example: "It was really great having you here today, thank you very much for your participation in class and I hope you are able to use some of the information we shared today. I look forward to seeing you again!"

- **Refer to Lesson Support Printout (pg. 7-8)**
 - **Final Key Points**
1. The FDA finalized the new Nutrition Facts label for packaged foods to reflect new scientific information.
 - 'Originally' manufacturers were to use the new label by July 26, 2018 allowing manufacturers with less than \$10 million in annual food sales to have an additional year to comply. However, the compliance dates have been pushed out (TBD) and there may be additional changes added. Some manufacturers have already complied and have new labels already in place (see below).
 - **Refreshed Design:** The "iconic" look remains, but with notable changes
 - Bolded and increased type size for "Calories" and "Serving Size," declaration.
 - **Vitamin/Minerals:** Manufacturers must now declare the actual amount, in addition to percent Daily Value of: Vit. D, Calcium, Iron and Potassium
 - **Footnote:** Changed to better explain what percent Daily Value means.
 - **Example:**
" *The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice."
 2. Reflects Updated Information about Nutrition Science
 - "Added sugars," in grams and as percent Daily Value, will be required on the label.
 - You want to consume less than 10 percent of your total daily calories from added sugar. This is consistent with the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
 - The list of nutrients that are required to be declared has been updated.
 - Vitamin D and potassium will be required on the label.
 - Calcium and iron will continue to be required.
 - Vitamins A and C will no longer be required but can be included on a voluntary basis.
 - While continuing to require "Total Fat" "Saturated Fat" and "Trans Fat" on the label, "Calories from Fat" has been removed because research shows the type of fat is more important than the amount.
 - Daily values for nutrients like sodium, dietary fiber and vitamin D are being updated based on newer scientific evidence from the Institute of Medicine and the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
 3. Updates Serving Sizes and Labeling Requirements for Certain Package Sizes
 - By law, serving sizes must now be based on amounts of foods and beverages that people are actually eating, not what they should be eating. How much people eat

and drink has changed since the previous serving size requirements were published in 1993.

- **Example:** The reference amount used to set a serving of ice cream was previously 1/2 cup but is changing to 2/3 cup. The reference amount used to set a serving of soda has gone from 8 ounces to 12 ounces.
- Package size affects what people eat. So for packages that are between one and two servings, such as a 20 ounce soda or a 15-ounce can of soup, the calories and other nutrients will be required to be labeled as one serving because people typically consume it in one sitting.
- For certain products that are larger than a single serving but that could be consumed in one sitting or multiple within the same day, manufacturers will have to provide “dual column” labels to indicate the amount of calories and nutrients on both a “per serving” and “per package”/“per unit” basis.
 - **Example:** A 24-ounce bottle of soda or a pint of ice cream. With dual-column labels available, people will be able to easily understand how many calories and nutrients they are getting if they eat or drink the entire package/unit at one time.

Closing

- **Distribute Handouts: “Food Facts: New & Improved Nutrition Facts Label” (Eng/Span)
“Key Changes: New & Improved Nutrition Facts Labe.” (Eng/Span)**
- **Thank participants for their participation**
 - **Example:** “It was really great having you here today, thank you very much for your participation in class and I hope you are able to use some of the information we shared today. I look forward to seeing you again!”