

*Webinar 5 Handout:*

## HOW TO READ FOOD LABELS

As you have gathered by now, I believe in eating whole foods. The fewer foods you eat that have a food label, the better. A garden doesn't grow nutrition labels, and the bulk of your food should come without a wrapper, box or can around it. However, there are plenty of minimally processed foods that do have a place in the diet (hello Greek yogurt and sprouted grain bread) and your clients will need to understand how to decipher between the junk (sugar-laden tomato sauce) and the good stuff (nothing but tomatoes, olive oil and spices) when they're on their own in stores. Understanding how to read and interpret a nutrition and ingredients label is an invaluable skill and crucial when making decisions for better health.

### **Nutrition Facts Label and Ingredients**

On the nutrition label, the fact label comes before the ingredient list, but the ingredients are just as important, if not more important, than the fact label. The ingredient list states all of the foods, preservatives, sweeteners, stabilizers and additives that you find in the product. Knowing the calories, fat, carbohydrate and protein content is important, but you want to know what types of foods these nutrients are coming from. Is the fiber from whole grains or from a processed added source? Is it high in protein from a natural source or is it coming from a soy protein isolate? Are there artificial sweeteners, chemicals, bulking agents, preservatives? Teach your clients to get to know their food and understand exactly what they've got before they take a bite.

Even if your client is an old pro at reading nutrition and ingredients labels, it's worth brushing up on, especially because the format has been changed. On May 20, 2016, FDA announced the new Nutrition Facts label for packaged foods to reflect new scientific information. The original deadline for big food companies to change their labels was July 2018 but that has since been extended. The original goal was for all labels to comply by July 2019..

First, let's take a look at an old nutrition label, discuss how to interpret the information, and talk about what will be changed when the new labels go into effect.

*Example: This label is from Maple Quinoa Clusters with Chia seeds by Kind.*

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1/3 cup (30g)			
Servings Per Container 10			
Amount Per Serving			
<b>Calories</b> 120	Calories from Fat 25		
% Daily Value*			
<b>Total Fat</b> 3g	<b>5%</b>		
Saturated Fat 0g	<b>0%</b>		
Trans Fat 0g			
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>		
<b>Sodium</b> 15mg	<b>1%</b>		
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 20g	<b>7%</b>		
Dietary Fiber 2g	<b>8%</b>		
Sugars 6g			
<b>Protein</b> 3g	<b>6%</b>		
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%		
Calcium 2%	Iron 6%		
*Percent Daily Values are 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

**Ingredients:** Oats, cane sugar, brown rice, canola oil, chia seeds, oat flour, maple syrup, millet, amaranth, molasses, buckwheat, quinoa, natural flavor, brown rice syrup, sea salt, Vitamin E (tocopherols to maintain freshness).

**Serving size:** The first thing to look at is the serving size. Serving sizes can vary from item to item. Some items have one serving in them, and some have thirty. Servings are important because if you eat an entire bag of something that is 100 calories/serving and the bag has 5 servings, you just ate 500 calories worth of that food (maybe thinking it was only 100 calories). So if the serving size says 1/3 cup know that the nutrition information is only for 1/3 cup. Serving sizes will be emphasized even more on the new labels with larger, bolded font. FDA is also giving standard serving sizes a reality check, knowing most people tend to eat more than some of the recommended amounts. For example, the standard serving for ice cream is increasing from 1/2 cup to 2/3 cup. We also know that people tend to eat or drink what's in front of them, so packages that appear to be single servings will be treated as such. For example, both 12 ounce and 20 ounce bottles of soda will be considered one serving because people tend to drink the whole bottle at one time.

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**Calories:** The calories listed are how many calories are in one serving of the item. On the new label, calories will be in the largest, boldest font.

**Fat calories:** This info is a relic and is being removed from labels. Research shows the type of fat is far more important than the amount.

**Fats:** There are a couple of important notes to remember about fat. Fat is essential to a healthy diet. We need fats in order to perform many cellular actions. However, all fats are not created equal. The fats you want to be eating are mono- and polyunsaturated fatty acids. Having an occasional helping of saturated fats is okay as well. Stay away from all trans fats, since they have no benefits and are being removed from the market imminently. Total Fat, Saturated Fat and Trans Fat are required on the nutrition label, while Monos and Polys are optional. Even though FDA has officially banned manufactured trans fats, there are some naturally occurring trans fats so it's staying on the label. What is changing is the Daily Value for fat--it's being increased from 65g to 78g for adults.

**Cholesterol:** Many products these days are being touted for having no cholesterol. Cholesterol is a substance that comes from animals, so most non-meat products should naturally have zero cholesterol. Chips that promote that they have zero cholesterol do not earn a gold star. We now know dietary cholesterol isn't the health villain we once thought it was, but it's still not something you want to totally overdo it on.

**Sodium:** It's important to pay attention to sodium on food labels, because sodium can be snuck into items you'd never guess. Sweet foods use sodium as a preservative. So even if you're not adding salt to your food, or eating naturally salty foods, you want to keep an eye out on the food labels because more sodium than you think can be in the foods you're eating. Even though the new Daily Value is 2,300 mg per day (a small drop from the previous DV of 2,400 mg), many experts recommend limiting sodium intake to 1,500 mg per day

**Total Carb:** When looking at total carbs, it's always nice to use a slice of bread as reference. One slice of bread is 15 grams of carbohydrate. So one serving of these quinoa clusters which contain 20 grams of carbohydrate is similar to eating 1 1/3 slices of bread. Remember that carbohydrates are not "bad", and they are certainly necessary in a healthy diet, but you want most of your carbohydrates coming from foods that contain dietary fiber and from whole foods like fruit, vegetables, dairy and whole grains like farro. versus highly processed foods.. The Daily Value for carbohydrates is dropping from 300 grams to 275 grams per day. Total carbohydrates includes fiber and sugars.

**Fiber:** Most Americans are not eating enough fiber, and the Daily Value is increasing from 25 grams to 28 grams per day. Ideally you want to get your fiber from whole plant sources like fruit, whole grains and beans. Many packaged foods have added forms of isolated or synthetic fiber (such as inulin or polydextrose). Many types of fiber can benefit health, but as you know by now I always prefer whole foods over highly processed foods.

**Sugars:** The biggest change we are going to see on the new nutrition panel is the addition of **Added Sugars** below Total Sugars. Research has confirmed that too much added sugar is a huge threat to health and it's time for consumers to see how much added sugar is really in their foods. There is also now a Daily Value for added sugar set at 50 grams per day (which is 12 teaspoons). Added sugar is going to include any sugar not naturally found in the food--even natural sugars like honey and maple syrup will be considered added, as well as concentrated fruit juice (because the sugars are super concentrated above naturally occurring levels). Added sugars will not include natural sugars in whole fruit, fruit juice (not concentrated), yogurt or vegetables.

**Protein:** Most Americans are getting more than enough protein in their daily diets, however protein plays a very important role in weight loss and weight maintenance. Protein makes you feel full and satisfied, so eating something with some protein in it can help you maintain a healthy weight. Always check the ingredients list to make sure the product includes the most natural forms of protein (not soy protein isolate for example).

**Vitamins and Minerals:** In the past, FDA mandated every label list amounts for vitamins A and C, iron and calcium. However, most people get plenty of vitamins A and C in their diets and not enough of other nutrients. The new label will require potassium, vitamin D, iron and calcium as these are the nutrients many people don't get enough of. Manufacturers must now also list the actual amounts of the nutrients as well as the Daily Values. DVs for calcium, potassium and vitamin D are all increasing.

**Ingredient List:** As discussed above, the ingredient list follows the fact label. And when reading the ingredient list, remember that the first ingredients are what the product is mostly made of. You want that to be the food you're trying to eat, not all of the preservatives or sugar or additives. If you're eating quinoa oatmeal clusters, the first ingredient should be quinoa and oatmeal. You want to be able to recognize and pronounce every ingredient on the list (for the most part, as not every hard-to-pronounce word is a threat to health), and if you can't you want to put that food right back on the shelf.

Here is an example of what the new nutrition facts panel will look like as provided by FDA:

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	<b>10%</b>
Calcium 260mg	<b>20%</b>
Iron 8mg	<b>45%</b>
Potassium 235mg	<b>6%</b>
<small>* The % Daily Value (DV) 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.</small>	

Looking at the food label on packaged foods is incredibly important. It allows you to make an educated decision about what food composition (calories, fat, protein and carbohydrate) and specific ingredients you are putting into your body. Keep in mind that the ingredient list is where you'll best figure out if the food is a high quality one. An ingredient list that is made up of food is going to be vastly superior to a list that is made up of unrecognizable ingredients. The new nutrition panel will make it a little easier for people to understand what's in their food and how much they should be eating, so make sure your clients are armed with the skills they need to navigate the grocery store on their own.