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Reading What It's All About

*Exercise your choice in the
purchase of products suited to
your new taste*



Now it's time to learn how to make the most use of food labels so that you are able to exercise your choice in the purchase of products suited to your new taste for food.



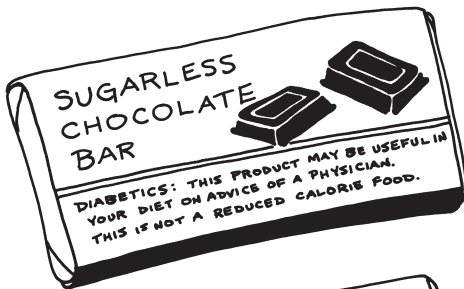
The food label is the manufacturer's way of communicating with the consumer. In order to best utilize this handy tool, it is important to understand how to read the label so that you get the information you need to make your decisions.

A BLUEPRINT FOR LABEL READING

The ingredients on the label are listed according to the proportion by weight of the ingredients in the product. The main ingredient in a recipe is first on the list. Check the list for the first 5 ingredients. If any of them are a source of fat or sugar, then the product is probably high in calories.

Reading only the front of the label can be confusing and even misleading. Take the example of the sugarless chocolate bar. The information on the front of the chocolate bar label makes it sound enticing to

the person with diabetes and maybe even to the individual who is concerned about sugar or weight. It is important to note that the words "sugarless milk" are on the front of the label in large print while the message to individuals with diabetes is in small print and hardly noticeable. The chocolate bar was bought at a store where the owner had a large sign advertising the fact that the chocolate bar was sugarless.



The small print on the back of the label is more revealing. The ingredients are listed as cocoa butter, sorbitol, milk,

mannitol, cocoa, ground hazelnuts, skim milk, emulsifier, saccharin, vanillin.

The main ingredient is cocoa butter, a fat that will

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**SUGAR, WHERE DO
YOU FIND IT?**

Anything ending in
"ose" — sucrose,
maltose, lactose,
glucose, etc.

Anything ending in
"ol" — sugar alcohols
such as mannitol,
xylitol, and sorbitol

Sugar from natural
sources such as fruit
(i.e. an orange
contains natural sugar
equivalent to 2 to 3
tsp (10 to 15 mL) of
sugar)

Honey, molasses, corn
syrup solids, etc.

See list at end of chapter
for more complete
version.

convert into fat in your body very efficiently. Further reading reveals that the bar contains 80 calories. You need to read it carefully, in order to realize that it means 80 calories per serving size of 4 squares and not 80 calories for the large chocolate bar. With 6 servings per bar, this equals 480 calories per bar. Most of the calories come from fat. Why does the chocolate bar have so much fat (56 percent of the calories come from fat)? One of the functions of sugar is a tenderizer. Taking out the sugar requires the addition of fat to bring back that smooth texture. With more sugar, the quantity of fat could be reduced.

Since this product does not contain any granulated sugar necessary for the smooth texture that is part of a good quality chocolate bar, does that mean that it does not contain any sugar at all? Not so. Sorbitol and mannitol are sugar alcohols that eventually break down into sugar in your system. Saccharin is an artificial sweetener. Combining these 3 sweeteners may simulate the taste of sugar but they do nothing for the texture. More fat is needed. The result is a chocolate bar that would not satisfy the chocolate connoisseur. Yet it contains the same number of calories (maybe more) than your old reliable chocolate bar!

The moral here is that if you really want a chocolate bar, don't settle for a substitute that leaves you wanting the real thing. Acquiring a taste for less sweetening and fattening foods requires gradual changes, not sudden disappointments. Inferior substitutions can lead to feelings of deprivation, eventually leading to binging on the real food.

Tasting, savoring, and enjoying your real chocolate bar may allow you to be satisfied with less than the whole bar. After all, if you know that you can eat it without guilt and enjoy it and have it at any time, you may eat only what you really want at the time. As you begin to think more like a nondieter, you may become more selective in the type of chocolate bar you like (i.e. not as sweet due to taste for less sweetening foods).

FACTS ABOUT HEALTH FOODS REVEALED

Many foods lead you to think they are nourishing, but they are not. Don't be lulled into a false sense of security by a healthy-sounding name. *Always read labels.* Some foods pretend to be health foods but are they really healthy?

Frozen Vegetarian Pasta Even though pasta on its own is fat free, prepared pasta products that omit meat may contain whole-milk cheeses that are high in fat. A 10.5-ounce (298-g) serving of one popular frozen vegetable lasagna contains only 225 calories; however, 50 percent of those calories come from the 12.5 grams of fat, which is largely saturated. The dish contains 3 cheeses and bread-crumbs topped moistened with partially hydrogenated oils. In contrast, the percentage of fat calories in one regular meat lasagna, another frozen dinner, is only 32 percent.

TIP If muffin weighs heavily in your hand (some are 5 oz or 140 g or more) and has a sticky surface, it is likely to have as many calories and fat as any cupcake. If it leaves a grease ring on the napkin or leaves your hands with an oily feeling, it probably is high in fat.

Packaged Pasta Salad Packed in the same way as instant soups, you boil up dried pasta and dehydrated vegetables from one packet. Another packet contains seasonings (including lots of sodium) which you blend with oil for a dressing. Unfortunately, 38 percent of the 190 calories in a 1/2 cup (125 mL) serving on one well-known brand of pasta salad come from 8 grams of fat (7 of which you added yourself). *Question whether adding all this fat is necessary.* Another option would be to cook your own pasta (just as quick) and add your own mix of any of the following seasonings by itself or combined with nonfat yogurt: unsalted herbs, Dijon mustard, chili powder, Worcestershire sauce.

Bran Muffins If the muffins contain bran, they will certainly contain fiber, but it may be very little. Most store-bought muffins have far more hydrogenated oils, sugar, and eggs in them than oat or wheat bran. Check the ingredients list. If bran is close to the bottom, you're being deceived. Look for whole wheat flour as the main ingredient, not wheat flour (refined white flour).

Carrot Cake If it is dense and moist this indicates a high-fat content. A typical cake may contain more than a cup (250 mL) of oil which has nearly 2000 calories by itself (about 200 calories per slice before



Many low- or no-fat food products contain so much extra carbohydrate, in the form of sugars, that they provide virtually the same number of calories as the full-fat version.

adding the other ingredients). *Note* These are all fat calories. Nearly all store-bought carrot cakes also contain a variety of sugars, refined flour, eggs, and shortening, plus cream cheese and more sugar in the frosting. From the point of health, you'll almost always be better off with apple pie, even though it may be loaded with sugar (does not apply to persons with diabetes).

Banana Cake and Banana Bread These are not much different than chocolate cake. One widely sold banana cake begins with sugar, continues with partially hydrogenated vegetable shortening and then flour. After that come the bananas. Just as carrot cakes do, banana cakes usually get 40 to 50 percent of their calories from fat. Store-bought banana breads may be as full of fat as the banana cakes. To avoid this, make sure that flour is first on the ingredients list and shortening toward the bottom. Less fat and sugar are required in making your own banana bread.

Frozen Tofu Desserts These are widely advertised as healthful stand-ins for ice cream. Cholesterol and lactose-free they are, but their calorie and fat content may actually be higher than that of ice cream. *Note* They may also be nearly tofu-free. Half the 230 calories in a 4-ounce (113-g) serving of one well-known frozen tofu product comes from sugars (high-fructose corn sweeteners, corn syrup, and honey) and the other half from fat (partially hydrogenated). Tofu is ranked fifth on the ingredients list. If the dessert has a chocolate or carob coating this will add more fat and calories.

Popcorn This is a no-fat, low-calorie snack when popped with little or no oil or salt and left unbuttered. *Note* A hot-air popper requires no oil. Microwave popcorn and pre-popped corn usually contain twice as many calories as conventional popcorn, a hefty dose of salt, and more fat per ounce or gram than most cookies. The fat comes from vegetable oils that are usually hydrogenated (saturated) and sometimes cheese is added as well.

Vegetarian Paté Some of these patés mimic the fatty texture of traditional liver paté by the addition of fat.

One brand lists palm kernel oil (more highly saturated than animal fat) second among its ingredients after water. Peanut oil is listed a little farther down the list. *Note* In this case the predominant vegetable ingredient is potato starch.¹

Peanut Butter Most commercial brands of peanut butter contain salt and sugar as well as added hydrogenated oil (which keeps it from separating), as well as salt and sugar. The kind made solely from peanuts has about 15 percent less fat and almost no salt. Even though this peanut butter that is made straight from peanuts derives nearly 80 percent of its calories from fat, the fat is mostly unsaturated. It's an inexpensive protein source with no cholesterol and could fit into a heart-healthy diet for adults. One tbs (15mL) contains 5 grams of protein, some niacin, potassium, and magnesium, 95 calories and 8 grams of fat. If the natural peanut butter is still too greasy for your taste, try spooning off some of the fat layer that rises to the top at room temperature. Add this lower fat peanut butter to whole grain toast with jam for a combination that provides moisture with less fat.

Crackers Some crackers have as much fat as potato chips. Read the label and watch for hydrogenated vegetable oil. If they leave a wring on your napkin or feel greasy to the touch, they probably will taste greasy and be high in fat. Gradually introduce some high-fiber crackers that are lower in fat. *Concentrate on the crunch and taste of these crackers.*

Cheese Check the label for M.F. (milk fat) or B.F. (butter fat) to guide you on the amount of fat in the product. You will note that some of the higher fat cheeses that contain more than 20 percent M.F. leave a sheen of grease on the surface when melted. As you begin to experiment with some of the lower fat cheeses, you will note that they have a stringier texture and are great for holding the ingredients of a pizza in place.

Most cheeses labeled "slender," "lite," "low-fat," or "part-skim" contain only slightly less fat than regular varieties. Even if a cheese has 50 percent less fat, as some labels promise, an ounce or gram of it may still

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contain about 5 grams of fat which is mostly saturated. This can account for 60 percent of its total calories. A popular cheese that claims to be 25 percent less fat than a regular brand contains 6.3 grams per serving rather than the 8.4 grams per serving in the regular version. This translates to 60 percent of the calories coming from fat rather than the 68 percent in the regular brand. This is certainly not 25 percent less fat.

Health and Welfare Canada's new nutrition labeling regulations define low fat as not more than 3 grams fat per serving and a maximum of 15 percent fat on a dry matter basis. The proposed definition for lean meat or poultry is no more than 8 grams of fat per serving.

This doesn't mean that you should be eating only low-fat foods. The idea is to increase your carbohydrate foods and gradually cut back on the fat used in food preparation. As your tastes begin to change, it will be more natural to choose prepared foods and meats with lower total fat content.

Remember, a healthful diet is all a matter of balance. Be careful not to totally avoid those foods that do not fit into the low-fat definition. If you approach label reading in this way you are right back into the diet thinking. As one of my client's put it, "I didn't need self-control, I just needed to think normally. I have gained the ability to look at my eating as part of my life, not as an all time-consuming hobby."

Read the labels so that you will be aware of high-fat foods to continue guiding your preferences towards low-fat foods.

HOW TO APPLY THIS KNOWLEDGE

Contrast this muffin recipe with the following recipe.

No Egg, No Sugar, No Fat Bran Muffins

Makes 12 muffins

Mix the following dry ingredients together.

2 cups	whole wheat flour	500 mL
1-1/2 cups	natural wheat bran	375 mL
1 tsp	cinnamon	5mL

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Add		
1-1/2 cups	buttermilk	375 mL
1-1/4 tsp	soda	6 mL
1/2 cup	honey	125 mL
1 tsp	vanilla	5 mL
1 cup	apple chopped (unpeeled)	250 mL
1/2 cup	raisins	125 mL
	Juice from 1 orange	
	Grated peel from 1 orange	

Mix all ingredients together. Lightly grease muffin tins, or line with paper muffin cups. Fill muffin tins. Bake at 350°F (180°C) for 20 to 25 minutes.

These muffins taste good and contain no fat. But do they really contain no sugar? There is no white granulated sugar in the recipe, but they do contain honey and sugar from natural sources such as apple, orange, and raisins. These are very nutritious, no-fat muffins that are moist and tasty. As you begin to acquire a taste for less sweet foods, you may even find these muffins too sweet. Cut back on the “sweet” ingredients slightly and re-evaluate the taste.

Raisin Oat Bran Muffin

Makes 12 muffins

1 cup	all-purpose flour	250 mL
2/3 cup	oat bran	150 mL
1 1/2 tbs	sugar	22 mL
2 tsp	baking powder	10 mL
1/2 tsp	baking soda	2 mL
1/2 tsp	cinnamon	2 mL
1/2 tsp	salt	2 mL
3/4 cup	buttermilk or sour skim milk	175 mL
(to sour skim milk, add 1 tsp (5 mL) lemon juice or vinegar to 3/4 cup (175 mL) skim milk. Let stand for 5 to 10 minutes at room temperature, then use.)		
	1 egg, lightly beaten	
1 tbs	corn oil	15 mL
1 tbs	molasses	15 mL
2 tsp	vanilla	10 mL
1/4 cup	raisins, finely chopped.	50 mL

Lightly grease muffin tins, or line with paper muffin cups.

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In a bowl, combine flour, oat bran, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt. In a separate small mixing bowl, combine buttermilk, egg, corn oil, molasses, and vanilla. Make a well in dry ingredients, pour in buttermilk mixture and add raisins. Mix just until dry ingredients are moistened.

Fill muffin cups 2/3 full. Bake in a 400°F (200°C) oven for 20 minutes or until lightly browned.

These muffins fall more into the category of the bread group and they are a little dry. Going from store-bought or restaurant-made muffins (which are 300 to 500 calorie cakes in a muffin tin) to these muffins may be too drastic a change. If these muffins are not sweet enough or moist enough, try noticing the difference in the 2 recipes. Adding fruit can give moisture and sweetness to a recipe. Also popping it in the microwave may moisten the baked muffins. A little jam or jelly can also add moisture and sweetness. Try cutting the muffin up in pieces, adding some ice cream, and having it as a dessert. Do not feel restricted. You can modify this recipe to suit your taste.

The latter recipe offered the option of using an artificial sweetener to take the place of the sugar. What does this indicate to you? Is replacing the 45 calories in a tablespoon (15 mL) of sugar, with an artificial sweetener really going to make a difference? It can be compared to eating a large meal and then ordering coffee and using artificial sweetener. Use your judgment and modify the recipes where necessary. Try adding different spices to the muffins to suit your taste. Mace and cardamom or lemon or orange peel are other seasonings that you may want to try. Let your creativity run wild. Vanilla is the extract in this recipe. However, there are a multitude of other flavorings on the market such as almond extract, lemon, coconut, rum, etc. that can give a new flavor sensation.

The baking powder and baking soda were increased in this recipe to allow the muffins to rise. These compensate for the low amount of sugar which is necessary for the egg to coagulate at a higher

temperature. It is important to sift the baking powder and baking soda with the dry ingredients; otherwise, pieces of powder or soda will be found in your finished baked product. If the taste of the baking soda or baking powder is undesirable, you may choose to slightly decrease these ingredients while increasing the content of sugar to 1/4 cup (50 mL) and adding some fruit.

Some guidelines to help you along in your process of experimentation.

- Cut down fat and sugar *gradually* so that you still enjoy eating the end product. For example, cutting the fat in half in your regular pie crust recipe and rolling the dough thinner with lattice crust on top (another option would be to use cookie cutters to cut out some of the top crust) results in a lighter pie crust that accents rather than detracts from the taste of the pie filling. Another tip would be to make the fruit filling thicker.
- To enhance the flavor, try other seasonings and flavorings. When cutting back on fat or sugar, adding more vanilla (i.e. doubling it) can bring out the flavor.
- To help moisten the recipe, try the addition of fruit or juice. Juice contains natural sugar, but the addition of liquid can also incorporate more moisture into the product.
- Sometimes words on labels may be misleading. For example, "Light." There is no legislation to govern the use of this word. It may refer to the product being "lighter" tasting, such as certain kinds of olive oil. It may refer to the product being "lighter" in color, such as certain kinds of soya sauce. Or it may refer to the product being lower in fat content such as certain kinds of mayonnaise.

In the United States, there is legislation for the word "light or lite". It is defined as 1/3 fewer calories or 50% less fat. If more than half the calories are from fat, fat content must be reduced by 50%

"Light" yogurt, in spite of its name, is not low calorie. It is a regular product at 260 calories per 8 ounces (225 g) and it is sweetened with sugar. Ingredients read: low-fat milk, sugar, skim milk, strawberries, water, bananas, food starch (modified), yogurt culture, natural flavor, gelatin, citric acid, with sorbic acid and ascorbic acid (to ensure freshness), artificial color.

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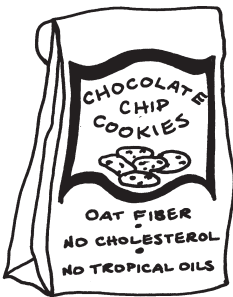
Read the entire label carefully to determine its meaning.

- Today there is overuse of the words “contains no cholesterol.” Here is an example.

The product may contain no cholesterol (for example, there may be no eggs in the product) but it may be high in saturated fat which has a greater affect on blood cholesterol levels as well as weight. As more consumers are catching on to the fact that the words “no cholesterol” may be misleading, many manufacturers are attempting to lower the amount of saturated fat in the products. But we’re still not getting the whole story. The product may in fact be low in cholesterol and saturated fat but high in total fat.

CONSUMER BEWARE.

Reading this front label leads you to believe that these cookies are good for your heart and are healthy to eat. A closer look at the nutrition information per



Ingredients enriched wheat flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamine mononitrate, riboflavin), sugar, vegetable shortening (partially hydrogenated soybean and/or cottonseed oil), rolled oats, chocolate chips, bran, raisins, corn syrup, honey, leavening (baking soda), salt, cinnamon, natural butter flavor, caramel color.

serving gives other information. One serving of 1 cookie contains 34 calories (these cookies are very small). The cookie has no cholesterol but it does contain 2 grams of fat. We know that there are 9 calories/gram of fat so this equals 2×9 calories = 18 calories of the total 34 calories coming from fat (18 divided by 34 = .529 \times 100 = 53 percent of calories in this cookie comes from fat). So these cookies are high in fat which is going to affect both weight and cholesterol level.

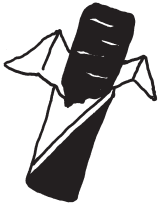
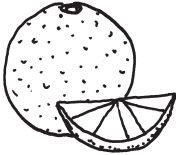
Check the ingredients list. *Note* Even though the cookies do not contain tropical oils (palm, coconut oils that are saturated), the third ingredient is vegetable shortening, a saturated fat that will affect blood cholesterol levels. The word hydrogenated in a product indicates hardened fat which makes the fat saturated. Even though the type of fat is from a

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vegetable source, it has been chemically altered through the process of adding hydrogen to the product which is called "hydrogenation." This process allows the product a longer shelf life and makes the fat hard at room temperature. Any positive effect of oat fiber on cholesterol levels is negated by the high amount of fat in the product.

Misleading labels and information can be confusing. The food manufacturer in order to sell his product has to make you want to buy it. *Highlighting trendy information that will grab your attention is what he will aim to do.*

Read the fine print as well and note where the different ways of saying "fat" and "sugar" appear on the label. Make it a learning and fun experience! Get the children involved. They may actually enjoy helping you. However, ensure that you don't get caught up with being preoccupied with the label. The product has to taste good and satisfy you.



THESE WORDS ALL MEAN "SUGAR"

- Brown sugar** A soft sugar whose crystals are covered by a film of refined dark syrup.
- Carbohydrate** Sugars and starches.
- Corn sugar** Sugar made by the breakdown of cornstarch.
- Corn syrup** A syrup containing several different sugars that are obtained by the partial breakdown of cornstarch.
- Dextrin** A sugar formed by the partial breakdown of starch.
- Dextrose** Another name for sugar.
- Fructose** The sweet sugar found in fruit, juices, and honey.
- Glucose** The type of simple sugar found in the blood, formed from food and used by the body for heat and energy.
- Honey** A sweet thick material made in the honey sac of various bees; sweeter than sugar.
- Invert sugar** A combination of sugars found in fruits.
- Lactose** The sugar found in milk.
- Levulose** Another name for fruit sugar.
- Maltose** A crystalline sugar formed by the breakdown of starch.
- Mannitol** A sugar alcohol.
- Maple sugar** A syrup made by concentrating the sap of the sugar maple.
- Molasses** The thick, dark to light brown syrup that is separated from raw sugar in sugar manufacture.
- Sorbitol** A sugar alcohol.
- Sorghum** Syrup from the juice of the sorghum grain (sorgo) grown mainly for its sweet juice.
- Starch** A powdery complex sugar (carbohydrate), i.e. cornstarch.
- Sucrose** Another name for sugar.
- Sugar** A sweet carbohydrate.