

LESSON: Food Labels (US)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Define and explain what a Nutrition Facts Label is
- Understand and recognize categories in the Nutrition Facts Label
- Understand and describe what a serving size is and what % Daily Values are
- Effectively read and interpret a basic Ingredients List

LEVEL:



MATERIALS:

- Activity Sheet: Level 3 - Matching Nutrition Fact Labels (US)
- Activity Sheet: Level 3 - Compare the Products (US)
- Activity Sheet: Level 3 - How to Read a Nutrition Facts Label (US)
- PowerPoint: Level 3 - Food Labels (US)
- Quiz: Level 3 - Food Labels (US)

LESSON:

Starter: The purpose is to introduce the idea of food labelling for grades 4-6. Students can critically consider questions such as: Why do we label and what is the meaning behind food labels?

Bring students together to have them start talking and thinking about these topics.

Section 1: What are Food Labels? Why are they Important?

*Ask Class: What is a food label? *listen to response, build a definition together, recap and compare with the following**

A food label is a label usually displayed on a package of food. The label contains information regarding the **nutrition of food** (*nutrition* - a part of food that gives you nutrients which help you to be healthy and grow). Other important parts of food labels include: Nutrition Facts Label, Ingredients List, and the weight of the food (usually in grams).

Food labels are very important because they help consumers know what type of ingredients the food contains, health information, and where the food was packaged.

For Example: It is important to know if a food was packaged in a facility that uses peanuts. If someone is allergic to peanuts, then they would know to be cautious if purchasing that item.

There are two important labels used on food packaging to let consumers know what the product is made up of. These two labels are the **Nutrition Facts Label** and the **Ingredients List**.

Section 2: Breaking Down the Nutrition Facts Label

What is the Nutrition Facts Label? It is a table that lists some of the major nutrients in food and what amounts of these nutrients the product has. It is organized by two categories:

- **Serving Size**
- **% Daily Values**

What is a Serving Size?

A serving size is the amount of the product the producer has listed as 1 serving (or what they suggest you eat in one sitting). Different products have different serving sizes.

For Example: 1 serving of raw leaf spinach might be 1 cup (1 fist full) while 1 serving of cooked leaf spinach might be ½ cup (1 handful).

Serving sizes are different for products and different for manufacturers. These serving sizes decide the nutrient values listed in the Nutrition Facts Label.

Class Activity 1: Looking at Nutrition Facts Labels

Nutrition Facts	
1 serving per container	
Serving Size	2 tbsp (30 g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	45
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3.5 g	5%
Saturated Fat 2 g	11%
Trans Fat 0.1 g	
Cholesterol 10 mg	
Sodium 100 mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 2 g	
Dietary Fiber 0 g	0%
Total Sugars 1 g	
Includes 0 g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 2 g	
Vitamin D	0%
Calcium	6%
Iron	0%
Potassium	0%

* 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.

This is a Nutrition Facts Label. There are a few sections on the Nutrition Facts Label to pay attention

1. **Calories:** measured energy in food. This is the amount of energy you get from a food item.
2. **Fat:** measured amount of fat in food. It is healthy to have good fats in your diet because fat is a source of energy, vitamins, and minerals, and it helps our body to function regularly.
3. **Carbohydrates:** another source of energy. Carbohydrates help our bodies to function throughout the day.
4. **Proteins:** proteins are a source of energy and they help to maintain our body's muscles and bones. Proteins also help our bodies to grow.

What are % Daily Values?

Percent Daily Values represent what amount (or percent) of a nutrient is listed in the Nutrition Facts Label. The percentage is based on a total daily need calculation out of 100% for a 2,000-calorie diet.

For Example: A nutrient may be listed as having 5 grams in the Nutrition Facts Label but may be ranked as 25% of your Daily Value. The percentage helps to explain the amount of a nutrient in the food.

These % Daily Values can help you to find out how much nutritional value a food item holds. A food with 15 grams of fat might not seem like a lot by itself, but next to the % Daily Value chart it can stand at 30% of your daily intake of fat.

It is important to read both the weight (grams/milligrams) and the % Daily Value of an item to get a greater understanding of how much of that nutrient can be found in that food item.

Class Activity 2: Understanding % Daily Values

Table 1: If you eat 30 grams of this product, you will eat 3 grams of fiber.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving per 1 bar	
Serving Size 1 bar (30g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	130
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 6 g	10%
Saturated Fat 3 g	16%
Trans Fat 0 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	0%
Sodium 3 mg	12%
Total Carbohydrate 13 g	6%
Dietary Fiber 3 g	12%
Total Sugars 13g	
Includes 0 g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 0 g	
Vitamin D 0 mcg	0%
Calcium 0 mg	2%
Iron 0 mg	8%
Potassium 0 mg	0%

* 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.

1. What does this mean when compared to your % Daily Values? (*Fiber* - a nutrient that is a part of a carbohydrate which helps with digestion)

Ask Class: *But how will I know if this a good amount of fiber to eat? Is it a lot or a little amount?*

A good note to go by to understand what percentage values mean is 5% or less is considered a **little**, whereas 20% or more is considered a **lot**. This explanation can help you to decide whether this product has high or low amounts of a certain nutrient.

Ask Class: *If eating 3g of fiber gives you approximately 12% of your daily fiber intake, is this a high or low amount?*

Answers

1. 12% is in-between the 5%-20% which means it's not a little amount of fiber and not a lot, making it in the middle - a good amount of fiber. We still want to eat fiber throughout the day in order to get 100% of our Daily Intake.

Ask Class: *Can you think of one way to get more fiber throughout the day?*

You can increase your fiber intake by:

- Consuming more of the product (if you eat 2 servings you will double the amount of fiber eaten)
- Finding products with higher amounts of fiber to eat

Section 3: How to Read an Ingredients List

The Ingredient List is a list of all the ingredients used in a product. It is organized by weight, meaning ingredients used more are listed first and ingredients used the least are listed at the end. Ingredients are separated by commas to keep items in order. When an ingredient is made up of multiple items, the different sources will be listed in brackets.

For Example: Seasoning (sugar, salt) because both sugar and salt are different sources of seasoning.

Ingredients lists can also have a '**contains list**'. This section lists key allergens (*allergens* - common foods that trigger allergies) which the product may contain. Some of the most common allergens include: eggs, milk, wheat, soy beans, peanuts, tree nuts, fish, and shellfish.

For Example: **Contains:** Wheat, Eggs

This label is extremely important for people who have allergies because it allows them to identify foods they cannot eat. This is a part of Food Safety!

Class Activity 3: Reading an Ingredients List

Table 2: Using the table below, answer the following questions:

1. Which is the most used ingredient?
2. Which ingredient is used the least?
3. Are there are key allergens in this product? If so, which one(s)?

Ingredients: Tomatoes, Water, Tomato paste, Sugar (brown sugar, sugar), Sodium, Spices

Contains: MAY CONTAIN PEANUTS

Answers

1. Tomatoes
2. Spices
3. Yes, the product may contain peanuts. An individual allergic to peanuts should be cautious when consuming this product. Instead, try looking for products made in a peanut-free facility.

Summary: Wrap-up and Take-Home Points

We have talked about the different parts of a food label today and why labels are so important! They allow us to see what ingredients are in a product and what amounts of different nutrients a food item may have. Try peeking at some Nutrition Facts Labels and Ingredients Lists during your next trip to the grocery store! You might be surprised what you find!

**Educators Note: For further facilitation, use the assigned quiz to recap the key concepts and test knowledge learned in this lesson.*

Adapted from USDA

REFLECTION NOTES: