

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 4 - Matching Nutrition Facts Labels (US)
- Activity Sheet: Level 4 - Compare the Products (US)
- Activity Sheet: Level 4 - How to Read a Nutrition Facts Label (US)
- PowerPoint: Level 4 - Food Labels (US)
- Quiz: Level 4 - Food Labels (US)

LESSON:

Starter: The purpose is to introduce the idea of food labelling for grades 7-8. 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 food package containing information regarding the nutrition of the food. Other parts of the label include:

- The Nutrition Facts Label
- Nutrition Claims
- Ingredients List
- The Weight of the Food (usually in grams)

Food labels are very important because they help let consumers know what type of ingredients they contain, different 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 main labels we use in Canada to let consumers know what the nutrition composition of their food is (*nutrition composition* - the nutrients that make up the food, or what is in the food item). We use 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 levels of these nutrients the product contains. It is organized by two categories:

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

What is a Serving Size?

A serving size is the amount of a product that the manufacturer has listed as 1 serving. 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 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (*1 handful*).

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

Class Activity 1: Looking at the Nutrition Facts Label

Nutrition Facts	
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 can help our body to function regularly.

The fats we want to try and minimize intake of include: **trans fats** and **saturated fats**. Whatever fat is left over after subtracting the amount of trans and saturated fat is what we often call **unsaturated or healthy fat**. This is the type of fat we want to try and consume more often.

For Example: Using the table above, we can determine the amount of unsaturated fat in this product by subtracting the 2.0g of saturated fat and the 0.1g of trans fat from the total amount of fat which is 3.5g.

$$3.5g - 2.0g - 0.1g = 1.4g$$

Therefore, this product contains 1.4g of unsaturated fat or what is also known as *healthy fat!*

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.

Ask Class: What can we do when comparing products with different serving sizes?

For Example: If we have two brands of cereal, Cereal A and Cereal B, but the serving size of Cereal A is 1 cup and the serving size of Cereal B is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup, how can we compare their nutrient values?

Class Activity 2: Compare the Nutrition Facts Tables

Cereal A

Nutrition Facts	
1 serving per container	
Serving Size	1 cup (55 g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	200
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1g	2%
Saturated Fat 0.2g	1%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	%
Sodium 200mg	8%
Total Carbohydrate 45g	%
Dietary Fiber 6g	24%
Total Sugars 9g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	%
Protein 6g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	%
Calcium 0mg	2%
Iron 0mg	50%
Potassium 0mg	0%

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Cereal B

Nutrition Facts	
1 serving per container	
Serving Size	$\frac{3}{4}$ cup (29g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	110
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0.3g	2%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	%
Total Carbohydrate 23g	0%
Dietary Fiber 0g	8%
Total Sugars 9g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 9g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 0mg	10%
Iron 0mg	30%
Potassium 0mg	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. Which cereal has more calories?
2. Which cereal has less fat?
3. Which cereal has more iron?

Answers

1. **For Cereal A**, 1 cup has 200 calories. **For Cereal B**, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup has 110 calories. In order to compare the number of calories in the two cereals, we need them to have the same serving size. To do this we can divide **Cereal A** by 4 to view the number of calories for $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cup and then we can multiply this value by three to see the calories for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup.

A: $200\text{cal} \div 4 = 50\text{cal} / \frac{1}{4} \text{ cup} \times 3 = 150\text{cal} / \frac{3}{4} \text{ cup}$

B: $\frac{3}{4} \text{ cup} = 110\text{cal}$

Therefore, **Cereal A** has more calories with **150** calories for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup compared to **Cereal B** only having **110** calories for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup.

2. **Cereal A** has less fat per serving because it has less grams of fat for a larger serving size.
3. **For Cereal A**, 1 cup has 200 calories. **For Cereal B**, $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup has 110 calories. In order to compare the amount in the two cereals, we need them to have the same serving size. To do this we can divide **Cereal A** by 4 to view the amount of iron for $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cup and then we can multiply this value by three to see the amount of iron for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup.

A: $1 \text{ cup} = 50\% \text{ iron} / 4 = 12.5\% \text{ iron} / \frac{1}{4} \text{ cup} \times 3 = 37.5\% \text{ iron} / \frac{3}{4} \text{ cup}$

B: $30\% \text{ iron} / \frac{3}{4} \text{ cup}$

Therefore, **Cereal A** has more iron with **37.5%** of your daily iron for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup compared to **Cereal B** only having **30%** of your daily iron for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup.

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 5 grams in the Nutrition Facts Label, but it may be ranked as 25% of your Daily Value. The percentage helps to explain the number of grams of a nutrient in your diet.

These % Daily Values can help you to gauge 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 stands 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.

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 a product has high or low amounts of a certain nutrient.

Class Activity 3: Understanding % Daily Values

Nutrition Facts	
servings per container	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 0g 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.

If you eat this product, you will consume 3 grams of fiber.

1. What does this mean when compared to your % Daily Values?
2. Is this a good amount of fiber?

*Use the description: 5% or less is a **little**, 20% or more is a **lot** to help decide whether this product has high or low amounts of a nutrient.

Answers

1. This means you will get approximately 12% of your daily fiber intake eating this product.
2. Yes, this is a good amount of fiber, it is more than 5% but it is not a lot because it is less than 20%.

Section 3: How to Read an Ingredients List

The Ingredients 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 list 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 4: Reading an Ingredients List

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 ones?

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 at 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: