Decoding Food Labels

Karen Bryla McNees, Ed.D., R.D.
UK Health & Wellness Program
March 1, 2012
COUNTERTHINK

IF FOOD PRODUCTS WERE HONESTLY LABELED...

ART - DAN BERGER - CONCEPT - MIKE ADAMS

www.NewsTarget.com
What We’ll Cover

• Basic anatomy of a food label
• Most common “traps” on a food label
• Strategies to cut through the food label clutter
• Empower you to become a more informed consumer!
Label Basics

Serving Size and Servings Per Container

• Know your portion sizes
• Compare your portion size to the serving size listed
• You might be surprised at servings per container!

Calories and Calories From Fat

• Consider how the calories per serving fit into your daily calorie needs
• Limit calories from fat to 30%
Total Fat

• No more than 5% of Daily Value (DV)
• No more than 2g saturated fat per serving
• As close to 0g trans fat as possible

Cholesterol

• If you are healthy, no more than 300 mg a day
• If you have heart disease, diabetes, or high LDL (“bad cholesterol”), no more than 200 mg a day
• No more than 5% DV
Label Basics

Sodium

• No more than 5% DV
• If you are healthy, no more than 2,300 mg a day
• If you have high blood pressure, limit to 1,500 mg per day
• To reduce sodium consumption, limit processed and prepared foods and eating out
Label Basics

• Try to get more fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron
• Look for 15% DV or higher
• Protein is not an issue in the US – most people get enough
Food Label Traps
Trans Fats

• Trap: “Trans fat free” does not guarantee there is no trans fat
  – If less than 0.5 g per serving, the label can state “trans fat free”
• Strategy: Look for partially hydrogenated oils on ingredient list
• Tip: To protect your heart, aim for as close to 0 g per day as possible
### Thin Mints

**Nutrition Facts**

- **Serving Size:** 4 Cookies (32g)
- **Servings Per Container:** about 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Per Serving</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calories</strong></td>
<td>150</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Calories from Fat</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fat</strong></td>
<td>7g</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturated Fat</strong></td>
<td>4.5g</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trans Fat</strong></td>
<td>0g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cholesterol</strong></td>
<td>0mg</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sodium</strong></td>
<td>115mg</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Carbohydrate</strong></td>
<td>20g</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dietary Fiber</strong></td>
<td>1g</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sugars</strong></td>
<td>10g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong></td>
<td>2g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INGREDIENTS:** Enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate [vitamin B1], riboflavin [vitamin B2], folic acid), sugar, partially hydrogenated vegetable oil (soybean, cottonseed, palm and/or palm kernel oils, TBHQ and citric acid to preserve freshness), cocoa, caramel color, contains two percent or less of cocoa processed with alkali, invert sugar, whey (milk), leavening (baking soda, monocalcium phosphate), cornstarch, salt, soy lecithin, artificial flavor, oil of peppermint.
Low Fat

• Trap: Many low fat foods do not always have significantly fewer calories than the original
  – Research shows we may eat larger quantities of low fat foods
  – Fat free and low fat products often have added sugars, sodium, or preservatives to improve taste
Low Fat

- **Strategy:** Consume full fat items in sensible portions – you’ll enjoy them more!
  - Many reduced fat products are good choices
- **Tip:** Choose “good” fats such as olive and canola oils, nuts, fatty fish, and avocados
### Nutrition Facts

#### Serving Size
8 Crackers (30g)
4 Crackers = 1 Full Cracker Sheet

#### Amount Per Serving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>% Daily Value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>3.5g</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>1g</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyunsaturated Fat</td>
<td>1.5g</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monounsaturated Fat</td>
<td>1g</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>0mg</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>140mg</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carbohydrate</td>
<td>23g</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>1g</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>8g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>2g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### INGREDIENTS:
Enriched Flour (Wheat Flour, Niacin, Reduced Iron, Thiamin Mononitrate [Vitamin B1], Riboflavin [Vitamin B2], Folic Acid), Sugar, Graham Flour, Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil and Cottonseed Oil, with TBHQ for Freshness, Corn Syrup, Contains Two Percent or Less of Calcium Carbonate, Leavening (Baking Soda, Sodium Acid Pyrophosphate, Monocalcium Phosphate), Salt, Cinnamon, Skim Milk, Soy Flour, Artificial Flavor.

Contains Wheat and Soy Ingredients.

---

### Nutrition Facts

#### Serving Size
8 Crackers (28g)
4 Crackers = 1 Full Cracker Sheet

#### Servings Per Container
About 13

#### Amount Per Serving

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>% Daily Value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>1.5g</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyunsaturated Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monounsaturated Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>0mg</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>140mg</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carbohydrate</td>
<td>23g</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>1g</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>9g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>2g</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### INGREDIENTS:
Enriched Flour (Wheat Flour, Niacin, Reduced Iron, Thiamin Mononitrate [Vitamin B1], Riboflavin [Vitamin B2], Folic Acid), Sugar, Graham Flour, Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil with TBHQ for Freshness, Molasses, Contains Two Percent or Less of Leavening (Baking Soda, Sodium Acid Pyrophosphate, Monocalcium Phosphate, Calcium Carbonate, Cinnamon, Salt, Cinnamon, Skim Milk, Soy Flour, Artificial Flavor).

Contains Wheat and Soy Ingredients.

---

NLI#05631

NLI#02130
Whole Grains

• Trap: Terms that sound healthful such as wheat flour, cracked wheat, enriched flour, stone ground, or multi-grain
  – Watch out for the term “made with”

• Strategy: Buy grain products with whole grains listed as the first ingredient

• Tip: Try to make half your grains whole
Whole Grains

• These terms always mean whole grain:
  – Whole [name of grain]
  – Brown and wild rice
  – Oats
  – Quinoa
  – Amaranth
  – Bulgur
CRACKED WHEAT
No Cholesterol Low in Fat

INGREDIENTS: ENRICHED UNBLEACHED WHEAT FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, MALTED BARLEY FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMIN MONONITRATE, RIBOFLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), WATER, CRUSHED WHEAT, HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP, YEAST, CONTAINS 2% OR LESS OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING: VITAL WHEAT GLUTEN, SALT, VEGETABLE OIL (CANOLA AND/OR SOY), HONEY, MOLASSES, RASIN JUICE CONCENTRATE, YEAST NUTRIENT (AMMONIUM SULPHATE), DOUGH CONDITIONERS (MONO-GLYCERIDES, SODIUM STEAROYL LACTYLATE, ASCORBIC ACID, AZODICARBONAMIDE, MONOCALCIUM PHOSPHATE), CALCIUM PROPIONATE (MOLD INHIBITOR), CALCIUM SULFATE, ENZYMES, NONFAT DRY MILK, SOY FLOUR.
Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (29g)
Serving Per Container about 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Per Serving</th>
<th>MultiGrain Cheerios</th>
<th>% cup skim milk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from Fat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% Daily Value**

- Total Fat 1g** 2% 2%
- Saturated Fat 0g 0% 3%
- Trans Fat 0g
- Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g
- Monounsaturated Fat 0g
- Cholesterol 0mg 0% 1%
- Sodium 160mg 7% 9%
- Potassium 85mg 2% 8%
- Total Carbohydrate 23g 8% 10%
- Dietary Fiber 3g 10% 10%
- Sugars 6g
- Other Carbohydrate 15g

Protein 2g
- Vitamin A 10% 15%
- Vitamin C 25% 25%
- Calcium 10% 25%
- Iron 100% 100%
- Vitamin D 10% 25%
- Vitamin E 35% 35%
- Thiamin 100% 100%
- Riboflavin 100% 100%
- Niacin 100% 100%
- Vitamin B6 100% 100%
- Folic Acid 100% 100%
- Vitamin B12 100% 100%
- Pantothenic Acid 100% 100%
- Phosphorus 8% 20%
- Magnesium 4% 8%
- Zinc 100% 100%

* Amount in cereal. A serving of cereal plus skim milk provides 1.5g total fat (0.5g saturated fat, 0.3g monounsaturated fat, less than 0g polyunsaturated fat), less than 0mg cholesterol, 200mg sodium, and 2g dietary fiber (1g sugars, and 1g protein).
** 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 75g
- Saturated Fat Less than 20g 25g
- Cholesterol Less than 300mg 300mg
- Sodium Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
- Potassium 3,500mg 3,500mg
- Total Carbohydrate 300g 375g
- Dietary Fiber 25g 30g
Fiber

• Trap: Many high fiber foods have “functional fiber”
  – Non-digestible carbohydrates isolated from foods
  – These may not provide the same health benefits as naturally-occurring dietary fiber
  – Many foods with functional fiber have little nutritional value
Fiber

• **Strategy:**
  – Look for ingredients that indicate functional fiber:
    • Chicory root
    • Inulin
    • Polydextrose
    • Maltodextrin
    • Cellulose

• **Tip:**
  – Consume a diet high in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans
  – 14 g of dietary fiber per 1,000 calories consumed
### Nutrition Facts

**Serving Size 1 bar (40g)**  
**Servings Per Container 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount Per Serving</th>
<th>% Daily Value*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from Fat</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Fat</strong></td>
<td>4g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>1.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td>0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polyunsaturated Fat</td>
<td>0.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monounsaturated Fat</td>
<td>1.5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>0mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>90mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Carbohydrate</strong></td>
<td>29g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>9g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>10g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong></td>
<td>2g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**INGREDIENTS:** Chicory root extract, chocolate chips with confectioners shellac (chocolate chips) (sugar, chocolate liquor, cocoa butter, dextrose, milk fat, soy lecithin), ethanol, shellac, hydrogenated coconut oil, rolled oats, crisp rice (rice flour, sugar, malt, salt), barley flakes, high maltose corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, sugar, canola oil, honey, glycerin, maltodextrin, palm kernel oil, tricalcium phosphate, soy lecithin, salt, nonfat milk, peanut oil, cocoa processed with alkali, natural flavor, baking soda. Color added, almond flour, peanut flour, sunflower meal, wheat flour. Mixed tocopherols added to retain freshness. Contains soy, milk, almond, peanut, sunflower and wheat ingredients.

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.*
Added Sugars

• Trap: Added sugar is everywhere!

• Strategy: Avoid products that have added sugar in the first few ingredients
  – Glucose, fructose, sucrose (any “-ose”)
  – Syrups or nectars
  – Fruit puree or fruit juice concentrate
  – Cane juice
  – Molasses
  – Honey
Added Sugars

• Tip: Consume a diet low in processed foods
  – Men: Limit added sugar to 36 g per day
  – Women: Limit added sugar to 24 g per day

NOTE: These guidelines do not apply to naturally-occurring sugars

DISTRIBUTED BY: SMALL PLANET FOODS, INC. SEDRO-WOOLLEY, WA 98284 USA

CERTIFIED ORGANIC

This product is certified organic by the Washington State Department of Agriculture in accordance with the organic standards of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
Reduced, Less, and Lower

• Trap: Reducing the sodium, sugar, fat or calories doesn’t automatically make it a healthful food

• Strategy: Ask yourself: “What is this food being compared to?”

• Tip: Use the nutrition information to help you decide if it a good choice for YOU
Fancy Endorsements

• Trap: Don’t assume it is always a better product just because it has an endorsement
  – These products usually cost more
• Strategy: Use the nutrition information to decide if it is a good choice for YOU
• Tip: Ignore these completely!
American Heart Association

Products displaying the heart-check mark meet American Heart Association food criteria for saturated fat and cholesterol for healthy people over age 2.

heartcheckmark.org

approved
bestlife
thebestlife.com

South Beach Diet™
Recommended

THE BASIC STAMP

WHOLE GRAIN
23g of
PER SERVING
EAT 48g OR MORE OF WHOLE GRAINS DAILY

THE 100% STAMP

WHOLE GRAIN
16g of
PER SERVING
EAT 48g OR MORE OF WHOLE GRAINS DAILY
Simple Tips

• Ignore the front-of-package claims and skip right to the food label and ingredient list
• Pay close attention to the first few ingredients
• Look for products with short ingredient lists
• Quickly scan the food label to view key nutrients
• Be willing to spend a few extra minutes in the grocery store
For more information, refer to pages 44-46 in your Healthier at Home book.

Questions?