Teaching Label Reading & Decoding Front-of-Package Marketing:

A Guide for Healthcare Professionals

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About Us

Alexandria Hardy is a registered dietitian nutritionist with over 15 years of experience specializing in accessible, evidence-based nutrition care focused on chronic disease prevention. As the owner of Pennsylvania Nutrition Services and an early intervention nutrition therapist, she has supported hundreds of children, adults, and families in improving their nutrition status.

Alexandria is also an experienced health writer and media consultant who brings a unique blend of clinical insight and communication skills to her work. She is known for translating complex health data into engaging, evidence-based content tailored to a wide range of audiences. Her work has been featured in *Today's Dietitian*, *Season Health*, *Purdue University Extensions*, and *Super Kids Nutrition*, including continuing education courses, magazine features, and wellness blogs. She is passionate about making health information relatable, practical, and empowering.

Objectives

- Understand how to teach the Nutrition Facts label
- Decode marketing claims on packaging
- Build patient-friendly strategies for teaching label literacy

What are patients looking at?

Brief History of Labels

- **Added sugars** must be listed in grams and % Daily Value; single-ingredient sugars follow different rules.
- **Labeling requirements for nutrients** have changed: Vitamin D and potassium are now required; Vitamins A and C are optional.
- **Daily Values and fat labeling** have been updated to reflect current science; “Calories from Fat” was removed, emphasizing fat type over amount.

US FDA



Updated Serving Sizes and Labeling Requirements for Certain Package Sizes

- **Serving sizes must reflect what people actually eat**, not ideal portions
- **Packages between 1–2 servings** must be labeled as one serving since they're usually eaten in one sitting
- **Dual-column labels are required** on larger packages to show nutrition per serving and per package for better transparency.

US FDA



Key Sections of the Nutrition Facts Label

- Serving size
- Calories
- Macronutrients
- Micronutrients



% Daily Value

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container
Serving size **2/3 cup (55g)**

Amount per serving
Calories **230**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	**10%**
Saturated Fat 1g	**5%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	**0%**
Sodium 160mg	**7%**
Total Carbohydrate 37g	**13%**
Dietary Fiber 4g	**14%**
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	**20%**
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* 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.

%DV



The %DV is based on a daily intake of 2,000 calories, a standard used for general nutrition advice.

For example, if a food item has a 5% DV of fat, it means it contributes 5% of the total fat you should consume in a day, based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Ingredient List - What to Look For



Teaching Tips: Making it Stick for Patients

- Use real packaging
- Focus on 2 - 3 key label parts
- Use visuals or smartphone apps



Front-of-Package Marketing Tricks





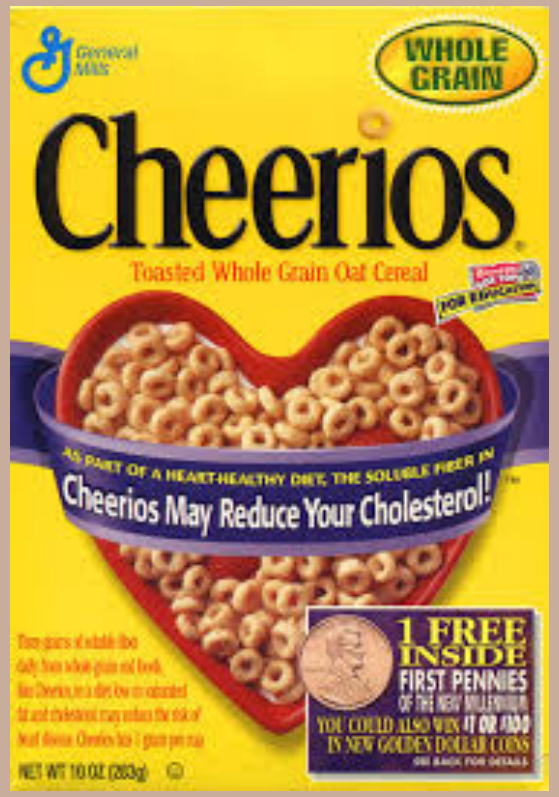
- What Is FOP Marketing?
  - Claims like “natural,” “whole grain,” “heart healthy”

5 Food Label Claims That Can Fool You

1. Multigrain
2. No trans fat
3. No nitrates or nitrites
4. Reduced sodium
5. Made with extra fiber



3 Types of Front of Package Claims







Frontiers, Cheerios, Tropicana, Horizon

Product Examples



Keurig Dr. Pepper's Sunny D highlights "100% Vitamin C" and should also highlight that it's High In Added Sugars, with 12g (24% DV) per 8oz serving



Kellogg's Special K Strawberry Protein Bars highlight "Good Source of Vitamin D," plus protein, fiber, and vitamin & nutrient content, and should also highlight that they're High In Saturated Fat, with 4g (20% DV) per bar



Tyson's Raised & Rooted Plant-Based Nuggets highlight "33% Less Saturated Fat," plus fiber and protein content, and should also highlight that they're High In Sodium, with 560mg (24%DV) per serving

FDA Healthy Claim Updates

- **Purpose:** Help consumers quickly identify foods that support a healthy diet.
- Key Changes:
  - Updated Rule (Dec 2024): Replaces 1994 definition
  - **Food Group-Based Criteria:** Must include a meaningful amount of:
    - Fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy, or protein
  - **Nutrient Limits:** Saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars



FDA Healthy Claim Updates

- Expanded Flexibility Includes:
  - Seasonings (e.g., lemon pepper with small added sugars)
  - Single-ingredient foods (e.g., olive oil, eggs, salmon)
  - Plant-based dairy/meat alternatives
  - Water, tea, and coffee (<5 cal/serving, no added caffeine)
- **Mixed Dishes/Main Meals:** New criteria accommodate complexity.



Timeline:

- Voluntary use now
- Compliance deadline: Feb 25, 2028

Next Steps:

- FDA to roll out education campaigns + develop a visual **"healthy" symbol**

Goal: Support public health & reduce chronic disease through clearer food labeling.

Cultural and Socioeconomic Considerations

- Healthy literacy
- Budget
- Language



Key Takeaways + Resources

- Nutrition labels can empower patients
- FOP marketing often misleads—dig deeper
- Simple, clear strategies make education more effective

- Resources:
  - FDA Label Reading Toolkit
  - ChooseMyPlate.gov materials



Questions?



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