

Introducing the New Nutrition Facts Label

NUTRITION CONNECTION



A look at the updated and improved Nutrition Facts label

The commercial starts by showing a make-up artist preparing an actor for his scene. She is complimenting his appearance, making the viewer wait with anticipation for the reveal of her subject. Another ad takes place on a fashion runway, with announcers highlighting the features of the models. Perhaps the one with the woman taking photos of her friend for his social media posts to get more followers catches the attention of the millennial generation. At this point, you may be wondering what new reality show or streaming program they are advertising. It probably isn't the latest trending media blitz that you are imagining; the ads are for the new Nutrition Facts label!

Did you miss this reveal in 2020? If so, don't worry—so did many of us. With other major news events happening last year, the launch of the new Nutrition Facts label was diluted. Many

health educators and registered dietitian nutritionists may have even missed it.

The FDA launched a modern, witty, and eye-catching campaign in early 2020, but it's not too late to utilize the tools for education and health. Let's review the changes and how we can use the updates to educate our clients and staff, or even use them for personal health.

HISTORY

The Nutrition Facts label, which first appeared on food packages in 1994, is one of the most commonly recognized graphics in the world, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The Nutrition Facts label was a result of the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) of



Kristin Klinefelter, MS, RDN, LDN uses the Nutrition Facts label in clinical and education settings daily and still finds it one of the most practical and useful tools when teaching nutrition.

1990 that mandated the labeling. The original graphic included information for consumers on all food packaging and identified calories, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, total carbohydrate, dietary fiber, sodium, potassium, and daily reference intakes for four vitamins and minerals. In the years that followed the launch of the label, more research was done on the health risks of consuming trans-fat, and in 1999 trans-fats became required information on the panel.

It was 26 years after the initial passing of the NLEA when the FDA proposed an overhaul of the Nutrition Facts regulations. This initiative was under the leadership of Michelle Obama, who championed for nutritional health, especially for school-aged children. The proposed changes included updated serving sizes to more accurately reflect actual consumption and a focus on added sugars. The estimated cost to the food industry to update the labels was about \$2 billion.



One focus of the Nutrition Facts label overhaul was to consider actual eating consumption and behaviors of Americans. We have instant availability of health information and it's crucial to ask consumers what is important to them, which is exactly what the FDA did. According to NPD Dieting Monitor, an ongoing tracker that captures consumers' dieting behavior and eating intentions, consumers mostly look at sugar and calorie content of foods. After looking at sugar and calories, people tend to look at sodium, total fat, and total carbohydrates—in that order. A goal with the new label will be to capture the interest of those who have not used the label before and to highlight what consumers are seeking.

Once they came up with the design and required information on the new label, the FDA rolled out the requirements to manufacturers. According to the FDA website, manufacturers with \$10 million or more in annual sales were required to update their labels by January 1, 2020; manufacturers with less than \$10 million in annual food sales were required to update their labels by January 1, 2021. Manufacturers of most single-ingredient sugars, such as honey and maple syrup, and certain cranberry products, have until July 1, 2021 to make the changes. These dates reflect extensions given in 2018. The FDA is working with the companies to meet the stipulations.

ONE FOCUS OF THE NUTRITION FACTS LABEL OVERHAUL was to consider actual eating consumption and behaviors of Americans... consumers mostly look at sugar and calorie content of foods, followed by sodium, total fat, and total carbohydrates.

So, go ahead and grab a package of your favorite food and let's review those changes!

Removal of *Calories from Fat*

When it comes to increased risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes, current science supports that the type of fat is more important than overall fat intake. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGAs) recommends that Americans consume less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fat per day starting at age two. For a 2,000-calorie diet, this is 22 grams of saturated fat per day. A consumer can look at grams of saturated fat to see if their food or meal fits into

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this recommendation. As mentioned previously, trans fat was added to the panel in 1999. It is recommended that we do not consume trans fat for optimal health.

Addition of Added Sugars

Evidence-based research indicates that reducing intake of added sugars is important for our health. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 9 teaspoons (36 grams) of added sugar daily for men, and no more than 6 teaspoons (24 grams) of added sugar daily for women and children. This addition to the Nutrition Facts label makes it easy for consumers to quickly assess if their consumption of a product helps them stay within this guideline. The DGAs recommend that we consume no more than 10 percent of calories from added sugars per day starting at age two, and avoid foods and beverages with added sugars for those younger than age two. For a 2,000-calorie diet, this would be 200 calories coming from sugar or 50 grams of added sugar. The Percent Daily Value (% DV) reflects this DGA recommendation. For example, 20 oz of a popular sugary soda contains 177 grams of added sugar, or 154 percent of the DV. That could create sticker shock for a consumer who is trying to improve their health.

Updated List of Vitamins and Minerals

The Nutrition Facts Label Final Rule requires the declaration of Vitamin D and Potassium and does not require declaration of Vitamins A and C anymore. Requirements to include Iron and Calcium are unchanged. Vitamin D and Potassium are now required on the label because Americans do not consistently get these nutrients. Vitamins A and C are no longer required, as deficiencies of these vitamins are uncommon.

Changes in Serving Size

By law, serving sizes must be based on the amount of food people *typically* consume, rather than how much they *should* consume. The FDA used data from USDA food consumption and intake surveys to create Reference Amounts Customarily Consumed (RACC) for categories of similar foods. RACC were used as standards to establish serving size. For example, the serving size for most soda products has changed from 8 fluid ounces to 12 fluid ounces. It is important to note that if the serving size for a food or beverage has increased, the calories and other nutrients listed on the Nutrition Facts label will also increase. Do not be alarmed if your favorite foods seem to have increased in calories. It may appear that the caloric content for some products has



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changed, when in fact the ingredients are the same, but the serving size has been updated.

New Format and Font

The new panel focuses on increased prominence of Calories and Serving Size. You will see them stand out in bold and larger font.

SUMMARY

The Nutrition Facts label has changed, but the intent of it has not. It is a hands-on teaching and informational tool, helping people choose wisely or consume the nutrients they should eat

more of, and less of those that they should limit. The result is healthier consumers that receive clear and consistent messaging when they are shopping for and eating their favorite foods and beverages. The campaign from FDA includes printable handouts and shareable videos, which can be helpful in an education or healthcare setting. To quote the announcer in the new campaign: “The new Nutrition Facts label: see what’s in it for you.” **E**

RESOURCES

- American Heart Association. <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sugar/added-sugars>
- Food and Drug Administration Nutrition Label Education Campaign. <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-education-resources-materials/new-nutrition-facts-label>
- Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>

CE Questions | NUTRITION CONNECTION



This Level I article assumes that the reader has entry level knowledge of the topic. The desired outcome is to ensure a foundation of basic concepts of the subject matter.

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Reading *Introducing the New Nutrition Facts Label* and successfully completing these questions online has been approved for 1 hour of continuing education for CDM, CFPPs. CE credit is available ONLINE ONLY. To earn 1 GEN CE hour, access the online CE quiz in the ANFP Marketplace. Visit www.ANFPonline.org/market and select “**Edge CE Articles**” within the Publications Section. If you don’t see your article title on the first page, then search the title, “*Introducing the New Nutrition Facts Label*.” Once on the article title page, purchase the article and complete the CE quiz.

1. The Nutrition Facts label first appeared on food and beverage packaging in:
 - A. 1875
 - B. 1984
 - C. 1994
2. What nutrient was added to the original Nutrition Facts panel in 1999?
 - A. Added sugars
 - B. Trans fat
 - C. Dietary fiber
3. According to the NPD Dieting Monitor, what nutrients do most Americans look for on food packaging?
 - A. Added sugars and calories
 - B. Total carbohydrate
 - C. Total fat
4. What four vitamins/minerals appear on the updated Nutrition Facts label?
 - A. Calcium, iron, vitamin A, vitamin C
 - B. Calcium, iron, vitamin D, potassium
 - C. Vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin B12, zinc
5. Serving sizes on the updated Nutrition Facts label:
 - A. Are recommendations of what Americans should consume
 - B. Are recommendations for what a typical American female should consume
 - C. Are a reflection of what Americans typically consume
6. The Percent Daily Value (% DV) on a Nutrition Facts label is based on:
 - A. The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
 - B. The USDA’s MyPlate
 - C. The Recommended Dietary Allowances for a typical male
7. What educational resources are available for free from the FDA New Nutrition Facts Label campaign?
 - A. Shareable videos
 - B. Printable handouts
 - C. Both A and B