

Nutrient Claims

Claims for calories

Calories free: less than 5 calories per serving

Low calorie: 40 calories or less per serving

Claims for fat

Fat free: less than 0.5 g of fat or saturated fat per serving

Saturated fat free: less than 0.5 g of saturated fat and less than 0.5 g of trans fatty acids

Low fat : 3 g or less of total fat

Low saturated fat: 1 g or less of saturated fat

Reduced fat or less fat: at least 25% less fat than the regular version

Claims for sodium

Sodium free or salt free: less than 5 mg of sodium per serving

Very low sodium: 35 mg of sodium or less

Low sodium: 140 mg of sodium or less

Reduced sodium or less sodium: at least 25% less sodium than the regular version

Light in Sodium: if sodium is reduced by at least 50% per reference amount

Lightly Salted: 50% less sodium than normally added to reference food, and if not Low Sodium must be so labeled on information panel

No Salt Added and Unsalted must be conditions of use and must declare, "This is Not a Sodium Free Food" on information panel if food is not Sodium Free.

The term *Light* may be used for sodium reduced products if the food is Low Calorie and Low Fat and sodium is reduced by at least 50% per reference amount.

Claims for cholesterol

Cholesterol free: less than 2 mg per serving

Low cholesterol: 20 mg or less

Reduced cholesterol or less cholesterol: at least 25% less cholesterol than the regular version

Claims for sugar

Sugar free: less than 0.5 grams (g) of sugar per serving

Reduced sugar: at least 25% less sugar per serving than the regular version

Claims for fiber

High fiber: 5 g or more of fiber per serving

Good source of fiber: 2.5 g to 4.9 g of fiber per serving

Percent (%) Daily Value

The Percent (%) Daily Value indicates how much of a specific nutrient one serving of food contains compared to recommendations for the whole day. The percentage is based on a 2000-calorie diet. If you need more or fewer calories, then your Daily Values would be different. To get the most benefit from Percent Daily Values, use them to choose foods high in vitamins, minerals and fiber — and to limit foods high in fat, cholesterol and sodium.

A product is:

- A **good** source of a particular nutrient if one serving provides 10 to 19% of the Daily Value
- **High** in a given nutrient if it contains 20% or more of the Daily Value
- **Low** in that nutrient if the Daily Value is 5% or less

Nutrients to Get Less Of

- Sodium
- Total Fat
- Saturated Fat
- *Trans* Fat
- Cholesterol
- Sugars

Nutrients to Get More Of

- Calcium
- Fiber
- Iron
- Potassium
- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C

References

American Diabetes Association.

<http://www.diabetes.org/food-and-fitness/food/what-can-i-eat/nutrient-content-claim-and-percentage.html>

PennState College of Agricultural Sciences.

<http://pubs.cas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/uk029.pdf>

US Dept. of Health and Human Services, Food and Drug Administration.

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/FoodLabelingNutrition/FoodLabelingGuide/default.htm>

Mayo Clinic. <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/food-and-nutrition/AN00284>

Nutrition Claims That Are Less Meaningful Than You Might Think

It sometimes is difficult to figure out which nutrient claims matter and which do not when you are at the grocery store. Reduced sugar, low sodium, cholesterol free, *trans*-fat free, all natural, and dozens of other claims catch our eyes as we wander down the grocery store aisles. Here are some common marketing schemes that are sometimes misleading.

Misleading numbers

Numbers sometimes are very misleading. Compare a brand's regular cookie with 4 grams (g) of fat to its reduced-fat version with the label stating that it contains "1/3 less fat." You still are talking about 2.7 g of fat/cookie, rounded up to 3 g on the Nutrition Facts label. Look closer and you are even more likely to see that the manufacturer has added more sugar to the reduced-fat cookie to make up for the loss of flavor from removing some of the fat. The reduced-fat cookies contain, at best, an equal amount of calories, although often the reduced-fat product actually will contain more calories.

'Light'

Likewise, to label a product as "light," the item only needs to contain one third fewer calories than the regular version. When a food is generally calorically dense, such as cake, this often does not add up to much. It is true that 200 calories is better than 300 calories for a food that does not contain many nutrients, but you still need to watch your portion size!

'Good source'

"Good source" claims do not mean much today. To qualify as a "good source," a product must contain only 10% of the recommended Daily Value (DV) for the specified vitamin or mineral, which amounts to not much at all.

'Cholesterol free' on nonanimal foods

"Cholesterol free" labels appear on grains, fruits, and other meat-, dairy-, and egg-free items. Cholesterol is only found in animal sources. Often bananas have "cholesterol free" labels. Many vegetable oils also contain this "cholesterol free" claim, which is useless in this scenario, because all vegetable oils are naturally cholesterol free.

'High in antioxidants'

"High in antioxidants" also does not hold much sway in reality. To carry this label, a food only has to contain 10% of the DV for vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, or selenium.

'Trans-fat free'

A food that is labeled as "*trans*-fat free" can still contain up to 1/2 g of *trans* fat/serving. If you want to guarantee that a product is really free of these potentially dangerous fats, look at the ingredient list to make sure that "partially hydrogenated oil" is not present.

'Contains real fruit or real vegetables'

Even though the label says that the product contains real fruits or real vegetables, powdered vegetables and fruits often are used, which contain none of the healthful properties of fresh vegetables and fruits, such as vitamin C, vitamin A, or fiber. Also keep in mind that many of the dried fruits used in these products also are coated in oil and sugar for extra flavor.