



POINTS TO PONDER

Label it nutritious:

Understanding food labels

An interactive discussion

These questions and activities are designed to stimulate discussion with students in the classroom.

1. Lead an interactive discussion with students. You will need empty food wrappers and boxes, preferably one per student. Give students a minute to review the labels and then ask:

- ◆ What is the product's serving size?
- ◆ How many servings are in the package?
- ◆ Are there health claims on the wrapper?
- ◆ Are there nutrient claims listed? (For example, light, reduced or high.)
- ◆ Ask students to locate different information listed on the label, such as the amount of calories, saturated fat and fiber.
- ◆ What ingredients are listed?

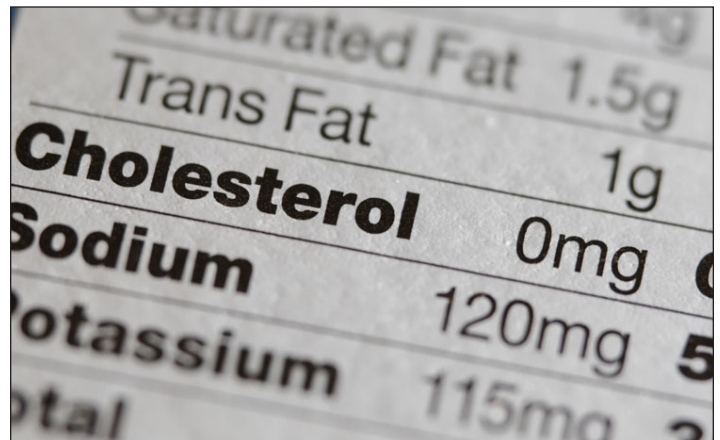
2. What are some reasons to carefully read food labels? (Examples include: to reduce caloric intake, maintain a low-sodium or low-fat diet and to avoid allergens.)

3. How are ingredients listed? (In descending order by weight.)

4. Explain that added sugar in processed foods have many different names. Where are those words on the label? (The ingredient list.) Ask students to identify added sugar in their products. (For example: dextrose, fructose, honey, lactose, sucrose, honey, brown sugar, corn syrup or molasses.)

5. Ask students if there is a difference between the amount they eat and the serving size on the label. Students should recognize that they often eat more than the recommended serving size.

6. Look at the % Daily Values on the labels. What is a % Daily Value? (How much one serving contributes to the recommended daily allowance of certain nutrients.) How can the % Daily Values help us make better food choices? (For example: Choose foods low in fat and high in fiber and vitamins.)



7. Ask students to recall when they have read a food label before buying the product. Why? What did they want to know?

8. Ask students how reading labels can impact their decisions about food. (Make different snack decisions, help their caregivers make different choices at the grocery store.)

9. Ask students if food labels are regulated. (Yes, the Food and Drug Administration regulates labels.)

Labels are required on most packaged foods, but some foods are exempt:

- ◆ Foods for immediate consumption, such as items served in the school cafeteria.
- ◆ Ready-to-eat foods prepared on site, not for immediate consumption, such as items prepared at a bakery or deli.
- ◆ Coffee or tea (plain), some spices and other foods that contain no significant amount of nutrients.
- ◆ Fresh fruit and vegetables and other foods shipped in bulk, but not sold to consumers in bulk.