



Nutrition labels to undergo changes in next few years

If you don't like change and also read food labels, get ready for a bumpy road ahead. In the next few years there are a series of new federal regulations that will be changing the face of nutrient information provided to consumers.

Question: When will nutrition information changes happen?

Answer: First, between now and May, nutrition labeling will change in restaurant chains that have more than 20 outlets. About a year later changes are required on major food product labels, and by July 2019 smaller food companies must comply with regulations.

Q: What general changes will occur on the labels?

A: First, you will see a new nutrition facts panel format and some changes in the nutrients listed on the panel. Most noticeable, calories will be in a much larger font size than everything else. Calories and nutrient amounts listed will reflect what is in the food. The "% Daily Value" reference amounts for fat and carbohydrate continue to be based on someone needing 2,000 calories a day — significantly less than many young growing adolescents and active adults need.

Q: What are some of the key differences between the current and

new label regulations?

A: Some of these differences appear small but, in fact, could have a domino effect on some of the information presented on labels.

>> Serving sizes of food like soda and ice cream will change. For example, both a 12-ounce can and a 20-ounce bottle of soda will be considered one serving and indicate the total calories in that amount. A pint of ice cream (currently 4 servings) will be 3 servings.

>> Vitamins A and C will no longer be required on labels. Vitamin D will take their place. Calcium and iron will remain on the labels, and potassium will be added.

>> In addition to total sugar, the new label will indicate added sugar.

>> The definition of what constitutes a "healthy" fiber is changing, and some fibers will no longer be counted as total fiber.

>> Some of the reference amounts for the "% Daily Value" are changing. These are listed on the right side of the nutrition panel to reflect the approximate amount of each nutrient that the average adult needs per day. Some amounts are increasing, some are decreasing

and some will stay the same.

Q: How will these changes affect the nutrition information consumers will see?

A: The combination of all of these changes means that even if a food has not changed its ingredients or composition, the label nutrient information and health and nutrient claims might need to change.

For example, over the past years the most common size for single-serving yogurt containers changed from 8 to 6 fluid ounces or less. Due to regulation changes, most yogurts in these containers can no longer claim that their product is an "excellent source" of calcium. Put the same yogurt in an 8-ounce container and it would likely qualify for the "excellent source" claim.

During the next few years, a food product might be available in both the old and new label formats, making it especially important to evaluate label calories based on serving size. An ice cream with the old format label might indicate lower calories compared with the new format — but it is still the same ice cream.

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