

# UC Agriculture & Natural Resources

## Nutrition and Health

### Title

The Lunch Box Series, B: Learning from Labels

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4v33n4wh>

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### Publication Date

2007-12-01

### DOI

10.3733/ucanr.8108

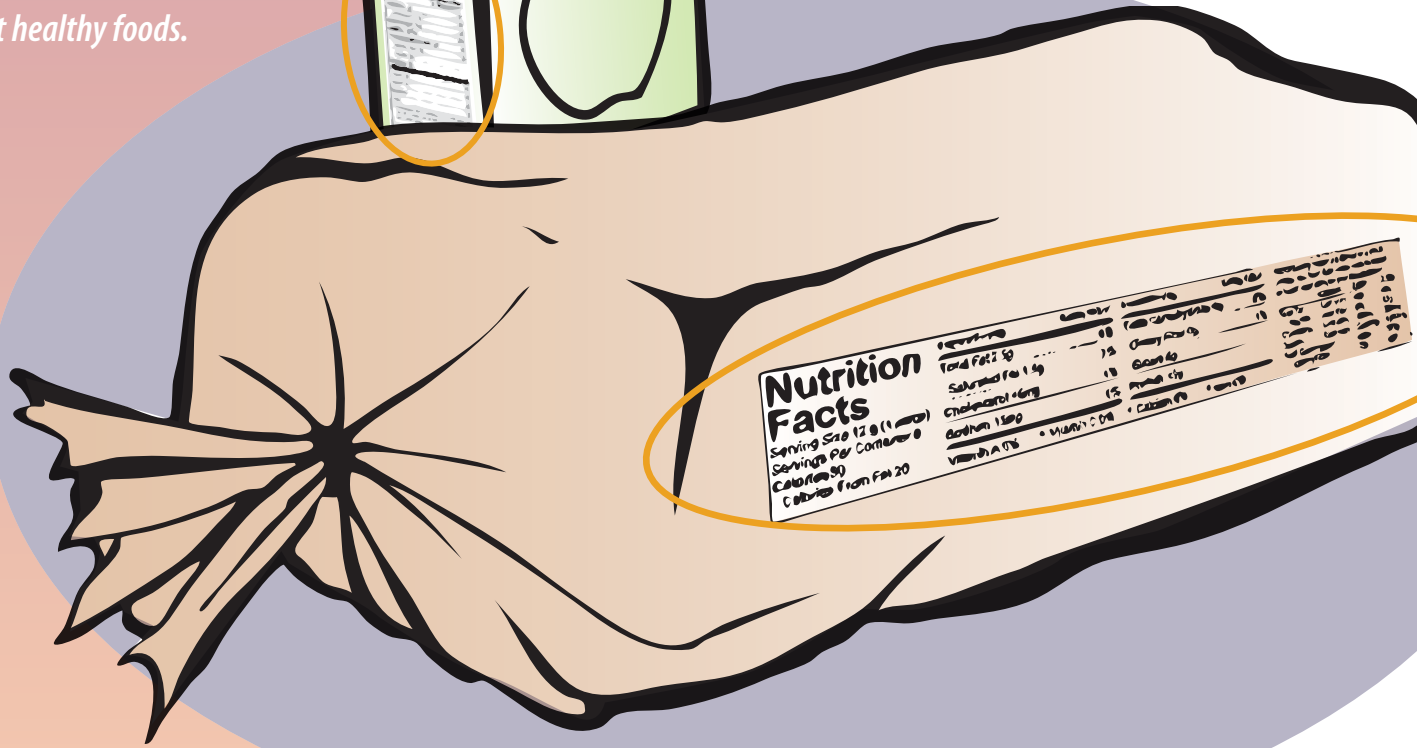
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# the Lunch box

HANDOUT B  
Publication 8108

## LEARNING FROM LABELS

Food labels can help you choose healthy foods for your child's lunch. Today's food labels provide information about ingredients and nutrient content. Read the ingredient and nutrition facts labels for information you need to select healthy foods.



## Ingredient Labels

Ingredient lists tell you what is really in the products you buy. By law, food packages must list all of the ingredients in a product. This information is always printed on the outside of the package.

Food ingredients are listed according to the amount of each ingredient in the package. The ingredient that weighs the most is listed first, and the ingredient that weighs the least is listed last.

Here's an example:

### Nutrition Facts and ingredient label



Look at this ingredient label from a loaf of **whole-wheat bread**:

*Ingredients:* **whole** wheat flour, water, wheat gluten, brown sugar, molasses, soybean oil, honey, yeast, salt, cultured wheat starch, oats, soy flour, dough conditioners.

Compare this ingredient label from a loaf of **wheat bread**:

*Ingredients:* **enriched** wheat flour, water, high-fructose corn syrup, wheat bran, soybean oil, molasses, wheat gluten, salt, whey, calcium sulfate, dough conditioners.

If you want whole grain bread, which loaf do you choose?

You would choose the first loaf, since it is made mainly of whole wheat flour. The second loaf contains mostly enriched wheat flour, which is commonly known as white flour.

Some wheat breads do contain a small amount of whole grain flour. The whole grain flour is usually listed as the third or fourth ingredient, which means that only a small amount was used.

**Hint:** When the ingredient list is very long, the first two or three ingredients usually make up most of the product.

## % Daily Value

The % **Daily Value** column in the Nutrition Facts label shows whether a food is high or low in nutrients. A 5% **Daily Value** or lower means that the food provides a small amount of the nutrient. A food with a 20% **Daily Value** or higher gives a large amount of the nutrient.

Use % **Daily Value** to select foods that are low in fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium and to select foods that are high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

### A Quick Guide to % Daily Value

- 5% or less is low
- 20% or more is high

**Note:** Although this label is based on adult needs, it can be used as a general guide for small children.

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (114g)  
Servings Per Container 4

Amount Per Serving

Calories 90      Calories from Fat 30

% Daily Value

Total Fat 3g      5%

Saturated Fat 0g      0%

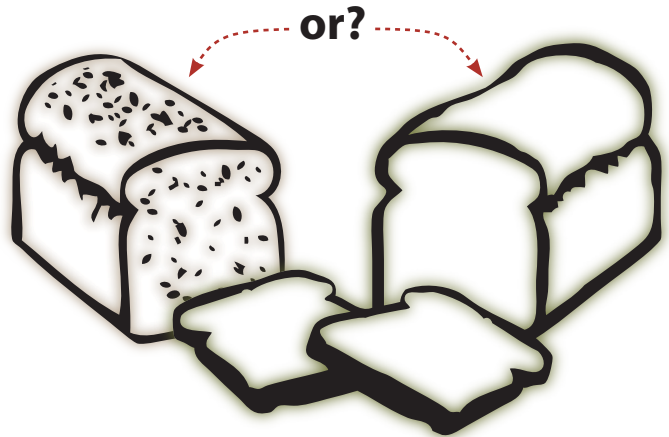
Trans Fat 0g

## Confused about Whole Wheat versus Wheat?

**Whole wheat bread** has the entire wheat kernel and all of the nutrients that naturally occur in wheat, including fiber and micronutrients. The natural color of the wheat kernel contributes to the brown coloring of the bread.

**Wheat bread** contains mainly enriched white flour. Only part of the wheat kernel is used to make this flour. This flour has been enriched to replace the major nutrients lost during milling. The minor nutrients and fiber are not replaced. The brown color of wheat bread comes from other ingredients, such as molasses.

Today's nutrition experts recommend eating more whole grains to increase our intake of dietary fiber. Diets that are high in fiber may help reduce the risk of some types of cancers and can help lower cholesterol levels.



## Healthy Lunch Ideas

*½ tuna sandwich on whole-wheat bread  
(made with reduced-fat mayonnaise)*

*Mini pretzels*

*Small green salad*

*Low-fat milk*



*Unsweetened, ready-to-eat cereal*

*Low-fat milk*

*½ banana*

*Fresh green beans*

*Water*



## Here's a fun meal that your child can help make!

*Homemade trail mix (recipe at right)*

*Carrot sticks*

*Low-fat milk*



## Homemade Trail Mix

*¼ cup toasted oat cereal*

*2 tablespoons raisins or chopped dried fruit*

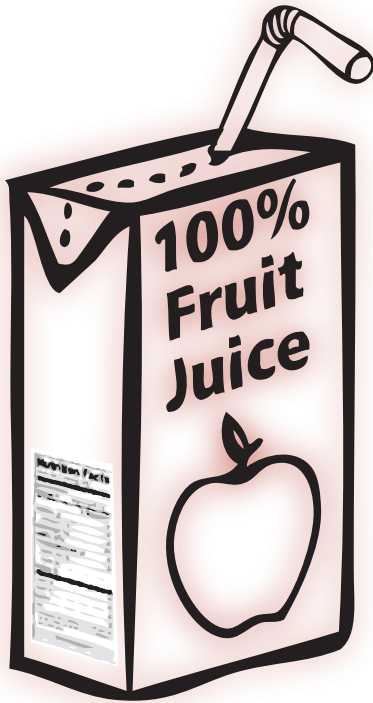
*1 tablespoon sunflower seeds (without shells)*

*5 pretzel sticks*



Place all ingredients in a small, plastic zipper bag. Seal the bag and shake.

## Is It Fruit Juice or a Fruit Drink?



*Is a beverage real fruit juice or is it an imitation fruit drink?*

Use the label to find out.

A juice product that states “100% juice” is made only from fruit juice. This product contains the nutrients that naturally occur in the fruit.

Fruit drinks, fruit-ades, and fruit punches are made mainly of sugar and water. Read the label to learn how much juice is in a product. Most fruit drinks contain less than 10% juice. Fruit drinks may be fortified with one or two of the major vitamins, but they do not have all of the nutrients found in real juice.

**For best health, limit 100% fruit juice to no more than 4–6 oz daily for preschool children.**

Fruit bits

Fruit rolls

Real fruit

### Healthy-Sounding Names

Many foods have healthy-sounding names. Products like fruit bits, fruit rolls, and fruit snacks sound like they are made of fruit. But they are really a form of candy made mainly of sugar, with a small amount of fruit juice concentrate. Don't be fooled by these product names! Put real fruit instead of “fruit snacks” in your child's lunch.

Fruit snacks

Fruit snacks

Real fruit

Fruit bits

Fruit rolls

## Granola Bar or Candy Bar?

Here are the first few ingredients on a food label:

Milk chocolate (*made from sugar, cocoa butter, chocolate, lactose, skim milk, milkfat, soy lecithin, artificial flavor*), peanuts, corn syrup, sugar . . .

**Is this label from a granola bar or a candy bar?**

*It's from a candy bar.*

These are the first ingredients of another product:

Milk chocolate (*made from sugar, cocoa butter, chocolate, lactose, skim milk, milkfat, soy lecithin, vanillin*), peanuts, corn syrup, sugar, milk . . .

**Is this label from a granola bar or a candy bar?**

*It's from a granola bar.*

Many granola bars have ingredients similar to those of candy bars.

Nutritionally, most granola bars and candy bars offer calories mainly from fat and sugar, but little in the way of other nutrients.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Sugar has many names. Ingredient labels may list sugar in these ways:

- corn syrup
- honey
- corn sweeteners
- molasses
- high-fructose corn syrup
- natural sweetener
- invert sugar
- malto-dextrin
- sugar
- brown sugar
- any ingredient name ending in -ose (such as dextrose, lactose, and fructose)

**How many sugars are in the following ingredient list?**

Unbleached wheat flour, butter, sugar, corn syrup, eggs, dextrose, nonfat milk, baking soda, cream of tartar

Answer: *Three:*  
Sugar, corn syrup,  
and dextrose.



## Nutrition Facts Label

The **Nutrition Facts label** can help you select healthy foods. This label states the nutritional value in a single serving of the product. It also shows how this food fits into the overall daily diet. For each serving of the product, the label gives the:

- *serving size*
- *amount of fat, cholesterol, and sodium*
- *amount of carbohydrates, including fiber and sugar*
- *amount of protein*
- *amount this food provides of the daily needs for vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron (some labels list additional nutrients in this section)*

The **Nutrition Facts label** makes it easy to compare two or more products. Let's look at how the Nutrition Facts label can be used to choose a lower-fat alternative to regular potato chips:

### Regular Potato Chips

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 30g (about 20 chips)	
Servings Per Container 6	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 160	Calories from Fat 100
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 11g	17%
Saturated Fat 4g	18%
Trans Fat 0g	

### Baked Potato Chips

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1oz. (28g/about 10 chips)	
Servings Per Container About 6	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 120	Calories from Fat 30
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	

### Mini Pretzel Twists

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 22 pieces (28g)	
Servings Per Container About 15	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 110	Calories from Fat 10
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 1g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	

The Nutrition Facts labels indicate one serving of each product is similar in size—28 to 30 grams.

- *This serving size of **regular potato chips** has 160 calories and 11 grams of fat.*
- *A similar serving size of **baked potato chips** has 120 calories and only 3 grams of fat.*
- *A serving of the **mini pretzel twists** has 110 calories and 1 gram of fat.*

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (114g)  
Servings Per Container 4

Amount Per Serving

Calories 90      Calories from Fat 30

% Daily Value

Total Fat 3g      5%

Saturated Fat 0g      0%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg      0%

Sodium 300mg      13%

Total Carbohydrate 13g      4%

Dietary Fiber 3g      12%

Sugars 3g

Protein 3g

Vitamin A 80%      Vitamin C 60%

Calcium 4%      Iron 10%

## More Information

More information on understanding and using food labels can be found at <http://vm.cfsan.fda.gov/label.html>.

*The Lunch Box* is a series of handouts designed for parents who pack lunches for their preschool children. The goal of these handouts is to assist parents in packing lunches that are nutritious, safe, and appealing for preschool children.

The author acknowledges the cooperation of the San Luis Obispo County preschools that assisted in the development of the *Lunch Box* program. This program was made possible by funds received from the First 5 Commission of San Luis Obispo County.



You will find related information in these titles and in other publications, slide sets, CD-ROMs, and videos from UC ANR:

*Children and Weight: What's a Parent to Do?*, DVD 6524D

*EatFit Teacher's Curriculum*, Publication 3424

*Fit Families Novela Series*, Publication 3496

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### Publication 8108

ISBN-13: 978-1-60107-518-5



This publication has been anonymously peer reviewed for technical accuracy by University of California scientists and other qualified professionals. This review process was managed by the ANR Associate Editor for Nutrition and Food Safety.



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pr-12/07-WJC/RW

