

Editorial

It is very fascinating to have shopping in markets or stores. Have you ever thought of how and what to base on when we choose foods for ourselves? The food itself is of course, attractive, but the food content and nutrition content are also our concerns. Choosing the healthy food is a way to prevent chronic diseases such as the heart disease, hypertension and cancers.



The Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) (Amendment: Requirements for Nutrition Labelling and Nutrition Claim) Regulation 2008 introduced the Nutrition Labelling Scheme for prepackaged food in Hong Kong. The aims are to assist us, consumers in making informed food choices; to encourage food manufacturers to apply sound nutrition principles in the formulation of foods; and to regulate misleading or deceptive labels and claims. It would come into effect on 1 July 2010.

Making good use of nutrition information on the food label gives us a better knowledge of the nutrition level of food. This also allows us to make comparison among similar types of food and thus making an informed choice for improving our dietary habit. Therefore this issue of Bridge would introduce the content of food label and how we could use it.



References:

- 1) Centre for Food Safety
- 2) http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/food_leg/food_leg_nl_guidance.html

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Food Labelling— Guide to be Healthy People

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When we buy prepackaged food, apart from the concern for flavour and price, we should also read the labelling information printed on the package. What kind of information could we get from food labels? What does the information mean? How does the food label help us make healthy food choices? We are going to look at the tips to understand and make use of food labelling in this newsletter.



The label of prepackaged food provides information about the food item concerned, including the name of food, the amount contained, the ingredients, the shelf-life, special instruction for storage or for use, the name and address of the manufacturer or packer and nutrition information. Among these, the nutrition label further provides information on the

nutrient content and energy level of food, which help us know better about the nutrition level of the food. Details in the food label are as follows:

Food Labelling

- 1) **Name of the Food**—It tells the nature and type of food.
- 2) **Count, Weight or Volume of Food**—The food label shall include the numerical count or net weight or net volume of the prepackaged food. This information is useful in comparing the price.
- 3) **List of Ingredients**—The ingredients shall be listed in descending order of weight or volume. For example: according to the information printed on the aluminium can of a coke, the listed ingredients: carbonated water, sugar, flavouring, colouring, means that carbonated water comprises the largest volume in this can of coke, followed by sugar, flavouring and colouring. In addition, according to the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulations, food items that contain the following substances which may cause allergic reaction should be specified in the list of ingredients:



Food items that contain the following substances which may cause allergic reaction:



- i. cereals containing gluten,
 - ii. crustacea and crustacean products,
 - iii. eggs and egg products,
 - iv. fish and fish products,
 - v. peanuts, soyabeans and their products,
 - vi. milk and milk products (lactose included),
 - vii. tree nuts and nut products, and
 - viii. sulphite in concentrations of 10 parts per million or more.
- The same Regulations also require labelling of the name or the identification number under the International Numbering System (INS) and functional class of food additives used in the food.

4) **“Use by” date or “Best before” date**—these are used to indicate when the specific properties of the food can be retained.

- i) **“Best before” 「此日期前最佳」**—it indicates when the food can reasonably be expected to retain its specific properties if properly stored. After this date, the quality and/or the appearance of the food may change, for example: biscuits may lose its crispiness.
- ii) **“Use by” 「此日期前食用」**—it is used for highly perishable food, for example: pasteurized fresh milk and packed egg and ham sandwiches. Consumption of food after this date may be hazardous to health.

Sometimes we may see “manufacturing date” on the food package, and we should note that it is different from “use by” or “best before” date.

5) **Statement of Special Conditions for Storage or Instruction for Use**—If special conditions are required for storage so as to retain the quality or special instructions are needed for the use of prepackaged food, a statement should be marked on the label.



6) **Name and Address of Manufacturer or Packer**—The prepackaged food should be labelled with the full name and full address of the manufacturer or packer. Consumers could contact them directly if they have queries on the food.

Keep in a cool dry place

7) **Nutrition Information** —It includes two types of information:

- i) **Nutrition label**
nutrition label is often presented in tabular format and it lists out the amounts of energy and other nutrients contained in food products.
- ii) **Nutrition claim**
it includes the following types:
 - (a) **Nutrient content claim** – it describes the energy value or the content level of nutrients contained in a food item. For example, “High Calcium”, “Low Fat”.
 - (b) **Nutrient comparative claim** – it compares the energy value or the content level of nutrients contained in similar or same types of food. For example, “a certain food item contains 25% less fat than ordinary version of the same brand”.
 - (c) **Nutrient function claim** – describes the physiological role of a nutrient in growth, development and normal functions of the body. For example, “Calcium promotes the development of bone and teeth”.

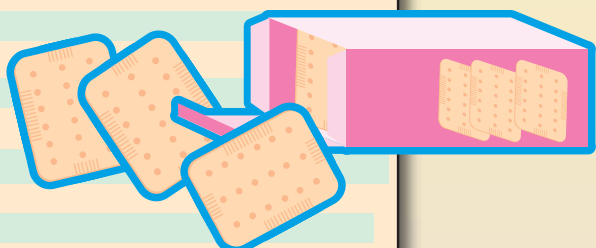
Nutrition Labelling

Nutrition label is part of the food label. The presence of nutrition label with energy and seven core nutrients (namely protein, carbohydrates, total fat, saturated fatty acids, trans fatty acids, sodium and sugars) will become mandatory for most general prepackaged foods from 1 July 2010 in Hong Kong. If any nutrition claim is made on a nutrient, the content of the claimed nutrient needs to be provided as well. Besides these nutrients, food trade may provide contents of other nutrients on a voluntary basis e.g. cholesterol and dietary fibre. There are exemptions for some products e.g. 1) Prepackaged food which contain insignificant amount (nearly zero) of energy or core nutrients,(e.g. tea leaves, distilled water; 2) Fruit and vegetables, raw meat and raw fish packed in a container without any other added ingredients, 3) Prepackaged food packed in a container which has a total surface area of less than 100cm², etc.

The first step to read nutrition label correctly is to understand the meaning of terms in a nutrition label, the next step is to pay attention to the energy and nutrient content level of the food. The following example is an illustration.

Figure 1 – the nutrition label of Brand A biscuits

Nutrition Facts (營養成分)
Serving Size (每食用分量) : 5 pcs (25g)
Servings Per Package (每包裝所含食用分量數目) : 15
Amount Per Serving (每食用分量中含量)
Calories (卡路里): 85kcal
Protein (蛋白質): 2.5g
Carbohydrate (碳水化合物): 12g
Sugars (糖): 0.5g
Total Fat (總脂肪): 3g
Saturated Fat(飽和脂肪): 2g
Trans fat (反式脂肪): 0.0g
Sodium (鈉): 100mg
Dietary Fibre (膳食纖維): 3g



- * **Serving Size:** serving size indicates the amount for each serving, it represents the amount of food people usually consume per eating occasion. The nutrient amount listed under the nutrition facts are based on this amount. Taking Figure 1 as an example, according to the nutrition facts of brand A biscuit, the serving size is 5 pieces and there are 15 servings in this pack of biscuits. If 5 pieces of biscuits are taken, the total fat intake is 3g and the caloric intake is 85 kcal. If 2 servings (i.e. 10 pieces of biscuits) are taken, the total fat intake is 6g and the caloric intake is 170 kcal.
- * **Serving per Package:** serving per package indicates the total number of servings contained in the food package.
- * **Calories:** calorie is the unit of energy value, energy supports activities of human body. Getting too much energy increases the risk of overweight and obesity, leading to increased risk of heart diseases, diabetes and certain types of cancer
- * **Protein:** protein is essential for growth, building muscle, bones and teeth. 1g of protein provides 4 kcal
- * **Carbohydrate:** carbohydrate provides major source of energy for the body. 1g carbohydrate provides 4 kcal
- * **Sugar:** sugar provides energy for the body but have no other nutritional value. Getting too much sugars may lead to excessive energy intake
- * **Total Fat:** it mainly refers to the sum of triglycerides, phospholipids and other minor components. Excessive fat intake increases the risk of coronary heart disease, obesity and certain types of cancer. 1 teaspoon of oil provides about 5g of fat (or 1 tablespoon oil provides 14 g of fat).

- * **Saturated Fat:** saturated fat raises the amount of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (the so-called “bad” cholesterol) in blood, the recommended intake should not exceed 1/3 of total fat. The more cholesterol found in blood, the higher risk of coronary heart disease, the recommended dietary cholesterol intake should not exceed 300mg per day.
- * **Trans fat:** trans fat lowers the level of high-density lipoprotein (“good” cholesterol) in the blood. Eating too much trans fat increases the risk of heart diseases
- * **Sodium:** sodium is the main component of salt, the recommended intake should not exceed 2000 mg per day (equivalent to approximately 1 level teaspoon of salt). Excessive intake of sodium increases the risk of hypertension, cardiovascular disease and kidney disease.
- * **Dietary Fibre:** it facilitates bowel movement, increases satiety, helps prevent constipation and obesity. The recommended dietary fibre intake for children under 18 years old is (age+5)g per day. The recommended dietary fibre intake for adults is 25-30g per day.



Conclusion Nutrition information on food labels increases our understanding on quality and the nutrition content of packaged food, thus helping us choose healthy food products. For those who have special dietary needs (such as patients with diabetes, hyperlipidemia), the nutrition information helps them choose food that is beneficial to their medical conditions. Therefore, we have to learn how to read food labels and utilize it to make wise choice and be healthy people.



Activity

Please read the following nutrition label.



References:
Centre for Food Safety
website: www.cfs.gov.hk

Brand B Milk

Nutrition Facts	Per 100ml
Calories	62 kcal
Fat	3.5g
Saturated fat	2.0g
Trans fat	0.0g
Carbohydrates	4.6g
Sugars	0.5g
Protein	3.1g
Calcium	170mg
Sodium	40mg

Please calculate how much energy and fat content one carton (250ml) of brand B Milk contain.

_____ kcal
 _____g of fat, equivalent to approximately _____teaspoon of oil.

Answer: One carton of Brand B Milk contains 155kcal, 8.75g of fat, equivalent to approximately 1.75 teaspoons of oil

Food is important to us. We can have a healthy body from eating nutritious food. Thus, adding label on food to specify the ingredients can help consumers know more about the quality of food and make appropriate choices.

We collect some students' opinions on "to me, food label is....." and share with you as follow :

"to me, food label is..."



It should clearly specify the nutrients, expiry date, manufacturing date and place of origin



It should indicate the ingredients of the food

It should state the ingredients and calories

The exaggerated wordings about the nutrients of the food should be controlled so as to ensure the quality of the food



It should list out the place of origin, the ingredients and the quantity of the food

It should show all the ingredients of the food, no matter good or bad, for example, vitamin and preservatives



It's a reference for us to choose among food items

Answer: b
Instant noodle is prepared by deep-frying cooking method and the oil content is much higher than rice noodle which is not treated with deep frying, thus rice noodle is a better choice.

People do have their preference for foods. However, maintaining a well-balanced diet and not being picky are important. A balanced diet refers to the selection of foods with different varieties and in appropriate portions, so that it can provide adequate nutrients and energy for the growth of body tissues, strengthening the immune system and keeping healthy body weight.

Dear Sze-sze,

Thank you for your letter.

You have mentioned that your favorite beverage is orange juice. Fresh orange juice is a healthy choice among the pre-packed beverages.

But not all pre-packaged orange juice is 'healthy'. Some of them may be orange-flavoured or sugar-added beverages. Therefore, we should read the food labels and compare the ingredients, energy and sugar content of orange juice of different brands.

If the food label on the pre-packaged real orange juice shows that the contents contains "sugar", it means that sugar has been added. The higher is the order of "sugar" in the list, the higher is the content of sugar in the orange juice. Long-term consumption of high sugar beverages easily lead to overweight. Therefore, we should choose those without sugar added.

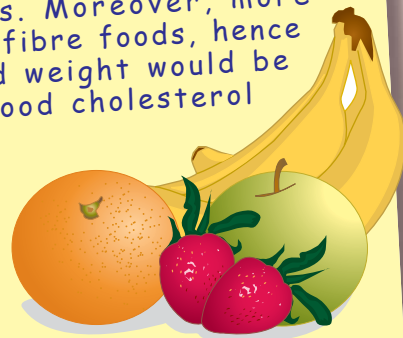
Orange contains vitamins C and dietary fibre. Vitamin C helps synthesize collagen; promotes the growth and repair of cells, gum, teeth, blood vessels and bones. Vitamin C also helps calcium and iron absorption and enhances immunity. As dietary fibre absorbs large amount of water, it expands in volume and gives a sensation of fullness. Moreover, more time is required for chewing high-fibre foods, hence less food would be consumed, and weight would be controlled. Dietary fibre helps lower the blood cholesterol level, thus prevents heart disease.

In fact, eating orange is better than drinking orange juice because vitamin C and dietary fibre will be lost after blending. As one cup of orange juice is made from three to four oranges, the sugar content of one cup of "no added sugar" orange juice is still high. So drinking too much orange juice may increase body weight. Furthermore, different fruits have different nutrients, we should eat a variety of fruits to ensure a rich vitamins and minerals intake.

Friends of Health Box,

How are you? My name is Sze-sze. I am now studying in Form 1. I love to drink orange juice very much. Do you know which brand of orange juice is the best one? What are the advantages and disadvantages of drinking orange juice?

Sze-sze



Your friends
Health Box

Interesting Knowledge Q & A



A pack of instant rice noodle weighing 70gm contains 1 teaspoon of oil.

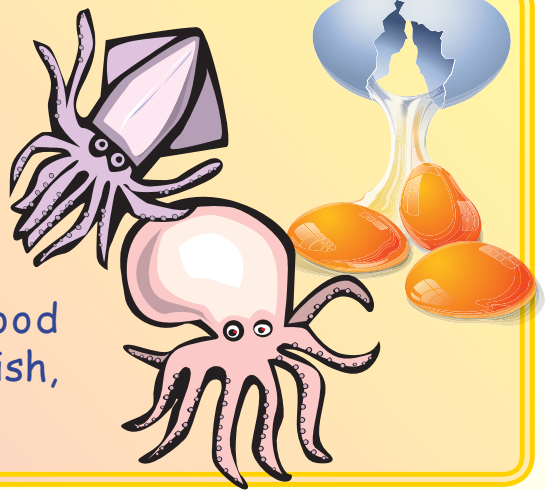
Do you know how many teaspoons of oil in a pack of instant noodle weighing 80gm?

- a. 2 teaspoons
- b. 4.5 teaspoons
- c. 6 teaspoons
- d. 8.5 teaspoons

Health Tips

Cholesterol

Excess intake of cholesterol increases the risk of heart disease. Cholesterol rich food include egg yolk, squid, cuttlefish, lard and animal fat



For enquiries of student's health problem, please write to "Health Box"



Please write your name & address, contact tel. no. in the letter.

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