Diets for Diabetes
Food Labeling

Look at food labels to help you decide how much of a product you can eat. You will want to check the amount of total carbohydrate in a serving to see how the food fits into your meal plan. In the list of ingredients, the ingredient present in the largest amount by weight must be listed first, followed by the other ingredients in descending order.

STANDARD OF IDENTITY

Most products have a list of ingredients. However, foods that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given a standard of identity do not need a list of ingredients. A standard of identity means that a food must contain certain ingredients if it is called a particular name (examples are mayonnaise, peanut butter, ketchup, jelly, and cheese).

LABELING TERMS

There are many terms found on food labels. Some of these terms have specific definitions. Others are regulated by the FDA, and the FDA has clearly specified how they can be used. Still, others are not regulated or well-defined and can be misleading and confusing.

SPECIFICALLY DEFINED TERMS

Nutritive Sweetener.

- A sweetener that contains calories (such as table sugar or honey).

Nonnutritive Sweetener.

- A sweetener with few or no calories (such as saccharin, aspartame, sucralose, and cyclamate).

LABELING TERMS REGULATED BY THE FDA

Free.

- The product contains only a tiny or small amount of fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugar, and/or calories. For example, a "fat-free" product will contain less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.

Low.

- A food described as "low" in fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and/or calories could be eaten fairly often without exceeding dietary guidelines. For example, "low in fat" means no more than 3 grams of fat per serving.

Lean.

- "Lean" and "extra lean" are U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) terms for use on meat and poultry products. "Lean" means the product contains less than 10 grams of fat, 4 grams of saturated fat, and 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving. "Lean" is not as low in fat as a product labeled "low."

Extra Lean.

- "Extra lean" means the product contains less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat, and 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving. While "extra lean" has less fat than "lean," it is still higher in fat than a product labeled "low."

Reduced, Less, Fewer.

- A diet product that contains 25% less of a nutrient or calories than the regular version. For example, hot dogs might be labeled "25% less fat than our regular hot dogs."

Light/Lite.

- A diet product that contains 1/3 fewer calories or 1/2 the fat of the original. For example, "light in sodium" means a product with 1/2 the usual sodium.

More.

- One serving contains at least 10% more of the daily value of a vitamin, mineral, or fiber than usual.

Good Source Of.

- One serving contains 10 to 19% of the daily value for a particular vitamin, mineral, or fiber.

Excellent Source Of.

- One serving contains 20% or more of the daily value for a particular nutrient. Other terms used might be "high in," or "rich in."

Enriched or Fortified.

- The product contains added vitamins, minerals, or protein. Nutrition labeling must be used on enriched or fortified foods.

Imitation.

- The product has been altered so that it is lower in protein, vitamins, or minerals than the usual food (such as imitation peanut butter).

Total Fat.

- The number listed is the total of all fat found in a serving of the product. Under total fat, food labels must list saturated fat and trans fat, which are associated with raising bad cholesterol and an increased risk of heart blood vessel disease.

Saturated Fat.

- Mainly fats from animal-based sources. Some examples are red meat, cheese, cream, whole milk, and coconut oil.

Trans Fat.

- Found in some fried snack foods, packaged foods, and fried restaurant foods. It is recommended you eat as close to 0 grams of trans fat as possible, since it raises bad cholesterol and lowers good cholesterol.

Polyunsaturated and Monounsaturated Fats.

- More healthful fats. These fats are from plant sources.

Total Carbohydrate.

- The number of carbohydrate grams in a serving of the product. Under total carbohydrate are listed the other carbohydrate sources, such as dietary fiber and sugars.

Dietary Fiber.

- A carbohydrate from plant sources.

Sugars.

- Sugars on the label contains all naturally occurring sugars as well as added sugars.

LABELING TERMS NOT REGULATED BY THE FDA

Sugarless.

- Table sugar (*sucrose*) has not been added. However, the manufacturer may use another form of sugar in place of sucrose to sweeten the product. For example, sugar alcohols are used to sweeten foods. Sugar alcohols are a form of sugar but are not table sugar. If a product contains sugar alcohols in place of sucrose, it can still be labeled "sugarless."

Low Salt, Salt Free, Unsalted, No Salt, No Salt Added, Without Added Salt.

- Food that is usually processed with salt has been made without salt. However, the food may contain sodium-containing additives, such as preservatives, leavening agents, or flavorings.

Natural.

- This term has no legal meaning.

Organic.

- Foods that are certified as organic have been inspected and approved by the USDA to ensure they are produced without pesticides, fertilizers containing synthetic ingredients, bioengineering, or ionizing radiation.

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