

What's on a Food Label?

Leader Guide

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Lesson Goal

Participants will learn about the information provided on a food label and how to use this information for making food choices and preventing food waste.

Lesson Objectives

As a result of this lesson, participants will be able to:

- use the new Nutrition Facts panel to make food choices,
- use the ingredient label on food products to identify food allergens,
- use the Nutrient Content Claims and Health Claims to make food choices, and
- use the dates on labels to make food storage decisions.

Program Materials

- Leader's Guide
- Participant's Guides
- Food Label PowerPoint presentation
- Program Evaluation form
- Optional: Printouts of the USDA Chill Chart and Fight Bac handout.

Before the Meeting

Read the Leader's Guide and Participant's Guide. Decide which activities to use for the program, and gather supplies and equipment.

At the Meeting

Ask participants: Are you confused about what is on the food label? What do the dates mean? What does "healthy" mean on the label? Does "gluten free" really mean that the product does not contain gluten? Where is the information about the food product containing an ingredient that is a food allergen?

Tell participants: The Nutrition Facts panel on food labels is changing. Restaurant menu labeling for calories will be required in 2017. These changes on the label can help us make decisions about foods we purchase and eat. Dates on labels are confusing, and we will learn how to use these dates to prevent food waste.

Activity 1

Materials needed:

- Participant's Guide for each participant
- Collect food labels that have the Nutrition Facts panel (maybe in different formats) with examples of the current Nutrition Facts or the new Nutrition Facts. Also, find labels that illustrate Allergen Labeling, Nutrient Content Claims, Health Claims, Gluten Free Labeling, and different types of dates.

Pass out samples of the labels to participants. Using the Participant's Guide, have the participants locate each part of the food label as it is discussed, such as the statement of identity, net weight, ingredient statement, etc. When each part of the label is found, have participants discuss its purpose and how it can be used for purchasing, using, or storing food.

Activity 2

Materials needed:

- PowerPoint presentation
- Computer and projector

OR

- Printouts of PowerPoint as individual sheets of paper

Provide each participant with a Participant's Guide and view the Food Label PowerPoint presentation. Allow for discussion of each part of the food label and how it can be used for purchasing, using, or storing food.

Activity 3

Use the following scenarios to help participants locate different components of a food label:

1. Your friend has just been to the doctor and has been told to eat foods that do not contain gluten. What foods could your friend eat? (without gluten, free of gluten and no gluten)
2. You would like to reduce the amount of added sugar in your diet. Where could you find this information on your food label? (includes added sugars on label)
3. Your son/grandson has been diagnosed with a milk allergy. Can he eat the food you are looking at? (Look for

milk allergens within the ingredient label or a statement below the ingredient statement that says, for example, "Contains whey, milk protein."

4. Your parent just had a heart attack. The doctor prescribed a low sodium diet. Would the food you are examining be allowed on a low sodium diet? (look for sodium free or low sodium on the label)
5. You want to use an oil that has heart benefits. Which oil would you choose? (olive, canola, and corn oils)
6. The store is having a special on infant formulas. You notice all the formula is past the "use by" date—do you want to buy and use the formula?
7. A package of lunchmeat has a "use by" date of March 20___. You opened the lunchmeat on November 2, 20___. Can you continue to eat the lunchmeat if it has been stored in the refrigerator until the "use-by" date? What if it was stored in the freezer?
8. The store has a cart of food items with expired "sell by" dates. Should you buy any of these food items?

After the Meeting/Evaluation

Before participants leave, ask them to fill out the evaluation form and mail it to the address at the bottom of the form.



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