



Welcome back to the new school year!

As a reminder, e-bites is our parent newsletter that encourages healthy eating and living for you and your family. Enjoy!

Decoding Food Labels






We all know that it is important for us as well as our children to eat healthy and participate in regular physical activity. But if you've been to the grocery store lately you've noticed that it can sometimes be a challenge to decipher the health claims on food packages in order to make the best purchase. How do you know if the claims made are based on scientific research and regulated, or if they are labels that have been generated by food manufacturers and health organizations?

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) carry the responsibility for regulating food labels. Below is a guide to common food label definitions that are regulated by these two government agencies.

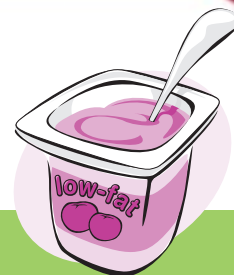


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If the label says:	What it really means:	Good advice:
 <p>Light</p>	The item has 1/3 fewer calories than its full-calorie equivalent product. Light also means the product has up to 50% less when it refers to sodium or fat.	Be sure to check the Nutrition Fact Label on these products, because often times sugar levels are higher in these "light" products.
 <p>100% Natural</p>	Products have no synthetic ingredients and contain zero artificial colors, flavors or preservatives.	Just because the product says "natural" it does not mean it's healthy. Keep in mind that the product can still be high in fat, sugar or calories.
 <p>Organic</p>	If the item says "100% Organic" it is certified that it was produced using only methods that preserve the farm, soil, and environment. If the item says "Organic" only, then at least 95% of the product's ingredients are organic.	The scientific evidence is not conclusive whether organic products are healthier but we do know organic products are made without pesticides, fertilizers, antibiotics and hormones.
 <p>Fat-Free</p>	The item contains less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.	Fat-free doesn't mean calorie free and most fat-free items have just as many calories as a regular version due to added sugar or starch. Don't be afraid of fat – we all need a little for good health.
 <p>Gluten-Free</p>	The product does not contain gluten, which is a protein found in wheat, rye, barley, and other grains.	If you have celiac disease gluten-free products are a necessity. Be careful of the term "wheat-free" – which doesn't mean it's gluten-free.

Sources: US Food and Drug Administration www.fda.gov and United States Department of Agriculture www.usda.gov.



Decoding Food Labels

If the label says:	What it really means:	Good advice:
 Low-Fat	The product contains 3 grams or less of fat per serving.	Try to skip the overly processed, tasteless fat-free choices and choose low-fat foods instead (which may be more filling and satisfying) or foods that are naturally low in fat such as fruits and vegetables.
Zero Grams Trans Fat 	The item contains less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. For example, an item can contain 0.4 grams of trans fat per serving and the label can read "0g Trans Fat." It can also be labeled "0g Trans Fat" if it contains less than 0.5 grams of partially-hydrogenated fats per serving.	Even if the product says "0g Trans Fat," pay attention to products that read "partially-hydrogenated" in the ingredient list. You may still be consuming trans fats. Also be careful of how many servings you consume.
 Healthy	Products contain only 3 grams or less of fat per serving and have 1 gram or less of saturated fat per serving and contain less than or equal to 480 milligrams of sodium.	These products can help people make better choices, but don't forget about other foods that don't carry this label – like fresh fruits and vegetables.
 Low-Sodium	Products contain 140 milligrams or less of sodium per serving.	Too much salt can lead to high blood pressure and/or stroke. Make an effort to choose products low in sodium. We should consume less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day.
 Low-Carb	Be careful – the FDA and USDA have not defined this term so it can mean many things.	Remember that some carbs, like whole grains and fresh fruits and vegetables are nutrient rich – so choose these foods rather than packaged foods with the "Low-Carb" label.
 Hormone-Free	The beef, poultry and dairy industries use this label which means that the animals were raised without the use of artificial hormones.	Organic products are raised or grown without the use of hormones. Keep in mind that organic or hormone free products may cost a bit more than other products.
 Antibiotic-Free*	The beef, poultry and dairy industries use this label to let you know their animals were raised without the routine use of antibiotics in healthy animals.	Antibiotics are sometimes given to all animals whether they are healthy or sick to prevent illness. Organic products are also antibiotic free, but may cost a bit more.

Sources: US Food and Drug Administration www.fda.gov and United States Department of Agriculture www.usda.gov.