



Deciphering Food Labeling Codes

Part II

What does it all mean?

In part I, there was a list of ingredients that are on food labels. There is a lot of things to learn about food labels and packaging. It almost feels like you need a degree on how to decipher these labels. I will try present to the best of my findings the information to help make it easier to be in the know. Again labels can be confusing and misleading, just be patient as you learn the information and apply it. It is not an overnight process and you will not be proficient at it after reading it once.

Manufacturers use popular buzz words like “reduced fat,” “heart healthy,” “sugar free,” and “high fiber” on packaging to entice customers to buy their products. *But what do they really mean?*

First, a few tips to remember:

- When you are comparing two products, be sure you are comparing *equal serving sizes*, ideally by weight.
- Don't just read the label, *read the ingredients list*. Remember that the list of ingredients lists the components that are found in the greatest quantities to the least.
- Understand what the claims on your labels really mean...

Fat

Fat from healthy sources like lean meat, eggs, coconut, extra virgin olive oils and avocados etc. is good for you! Be aware that *reduced fat* or *low-fat* products are generally highly-processed with added sugar and artificial flavors to make them taste good.

- **Reduced Fat:** Contains 25% less fat than the same regular product.
- **Light:** Contains up to 50% less fat than the same regular product.
- **Low-Fat:** Contains less than 3 grams of fat per serving.
- **Fat-Free:** Contains ½ a gram of fat per serving or less.
- **0 Grams Trans Fat:** Contains less than 0.5 gram of trans fats per serving.
- **Hydrogenated or Partially Hydrogenated:** These terms indicate the presence of trans fats in a product.
- **Heart Healthy:** Product is low in saturated fat, low in cholesterol, and low in sodium, and contains no trans fats. Contains only three grams or less of fat per serving and has at least 0.6 gram of soluble fiber.

Calories

Just like with low-fat items, products marked low calorie are not necessarily healthy and are usually filled with artificial sweeteners.

- **Calorie Free:** Contains less than 5 calories per serving.
- **Low Calories:** Contains less than 40 calories per serving.
- **Light:** Contains a third fewer calories or 50 percent less fat than the regular product.

Sodium

Eating less processed foods will automatically reduce your sodium intake. But you'll want to look out for the terms below if you want to enjoy some of your favorite foods without the high amounts of sodium.

- **Low Sodium:** Contains no more than 140 mg of sodium per serving
- **Very Low Sodium:** Contains 35 mg or less sodium per serving.
- **Reduced Sodium:** Contains 25% less sodium than the same regular product.
- **Light in Sodium:** Contains half the sodium of the same regular product.
- **Sodium Free:** Contains less than 5 mg of sodium per serving.