Nutrition Facts labels get an update

Source: Courtney Luecking, assistant extension professor

You may have noticed some changes recently to the Nutrition Facts labels on common grocery items. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has changed the labels on packaged foods and drinks, marking the first major changes to the labels in 20 years.

Changes to the serving size, calories, percent daily values and nutrients on the label are the result of updated scientific information, new research and public input. The goals of the new labels are to make it easier for you to make informed decisions about food and live a healthier life.

The FDA made changes to the serving size to reflect how much people usually eat and drink. However, you should note that a serving size is not a daily nutrition recommendation.

Calorie changes include making the calorie font bolder and bigger, so you can clearly see how many calories are in a serving size. The number of calories you should eat every day varies by person. You can determine what your daily calories needs are by visiting the MyPlate website at <https://www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan>.

The percent daily value shows you the amount of a particular nutrient available in each serving of food or drink. Nutrients shown on the food label include fat, carbohydrates, protein, cholesterol and select vitamins and minerals. The FDA updated these daily nutrient values, which could make those values higher or lower than before. As a general rule, if the label shows 5% or less daily value of a nutrient, then it is considered low in that particular nutrient. If the daily value is 20% or above, then the food contains a high level of that nutrient.

In addition to changes to the daily values, the FDA removed and added nutrients to food labels. Added sugars are now required to be on the label. This change was made because added sugars make it harder for you to get the nutrients you need and stay within your daily calorie limit. Nutrients that were added include potassium and vitamin D. American diets often lack in these two nutrients. Potassium can lower your risk of developing high blood pressure, and vitamin D can reduce your risk of developing osteoporosis. Vitamins A and C are nutrients that the FDA removed, because most of us get the daily recommended amounts of these vitamins in our diets. They also removed calories from fat as research has determined the type of fat you consume is more important than the amount.

For more information about nutrient label changes, how to read nutrition labels and general nutrition questions, contact the (COUNTY NAME) office of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

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