

INFORMATION SHEET THE LABELING LAW

The Food and Drug Administration's requested legislation became law in 1993. The nutrition labeling law is very specific about what **must** be on labels of most food products.

According to law, all labels **must** state:

1. The common name of the product.
2. The name and address of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor.
3. The style, type, description of the product.
4. The net contents in terms of weight, measure, or count.
5. Any special information that affects people with health problems.
6. Presence of artificial color, flavor, or preservatives.
7. A list of ingredients in order of weight in the package. The ingredient of the largest amount is listed first.
8. Nutritional labeling must be done if the food has nutrients added or if it claims to be highly nutritious.

This information has to be prominently displayed, typically on the front of the package, and in ordinary words. On the front or side of the package, most products are required to state the ingredients, listed in descending order of predominance by weight. That is all there is to the required label, but if you know how to read the front and side of a package you're already one step ahead of the naive general public. This is particularly true in regard to the ingredient list. Whatever is listed first is what the package contains the largest amount of.

NUTRITION FACTS REQUIRED

The **new** labels must include a nutrition facts section if any nutrition information or claim is made on the label, (e.g., provides 9 essential vitamins and minerals) it must conform to the following format:

- serving or portion size and serving or portions per container
- calories from fat per serving
- % daily value—of fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrate (including dietary fiber and sugars) and protein
- % of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium and Iron are required on the label
- a notation that the daily values are reference numbers based on a daily diet of 2,000 and 2,500 calories
- some labels may tell the approximate number of calories in a gram of fat, carbohydrate, and protein

CHANGES TO THE LAW SINCE 1993

Effective January 1, 2006, where fat content is listed, label must also list amount of trans fats in the food item. Still watch ingredients, because the amount of trans fat is listed per serving and if the amount is small enough, the label can read 0 trans fat, while there still may be a trace. Labels must also indicate if the food product contains any ingredients that contain protein derived from the eight major allergenic foods, including milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, soybeans, and wheat.