

Decoding Food Labels

This playbook describes the steps for reading and understanding food labels, enabling healthier choices in grocery shopping.

Step 1: **Serving Size**

Begin by looking at the serving size and servings per container at the top of the label. This information is critical because all the nutritional values you read below are based on this serving size.

Step 2: **Calories**

Check the number of calories per serving. This will help you manage your total caloric intake, especially if you are tracking your calorie consumption for weight management.

Step 3: **Nutrients**

Look at the nutrients section, which often includes fats, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, and protein. Use this information to avoid excessive intake of saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, and sodium, which can increase health risks.

Step 4: **Percent Daily Value**

Understand the Percent Daily Value (%DV) which indicates how much of a certain nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 5% DV or less is considered low, and 20% DV or more is considered high for nutrients.

Step 5: Ingredients List

Read the ingredients list to identify the ingredients that are present in the product. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, so the first few ingredients are present in the largest amounts. Watch for added sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats.

Step 6: Allergen Information

Check for allergen information if you have food allergies. This information is usually found below the ingredient list and will highlight common allergens like milk, nuts, eggs, soy, and shellfish.

Step 7: Certifications & Claims

Identify any certifications (such as organic, non-GMO, gluten-free) and evaluate any health claims cautiously. Remember that terms like 'natural' and 'healthy' are not strictly regulated, so look at the full nutrition and ingredient information to make informed choices.

General Notes

Serving Size Variation

Watch for varying serving sizes when comparing similar food products; manufacturers often use different serving sizes, which can be misleading.

Added Sugars

Be aware that added sugars can be listed in various forms like corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, and more. Limiting added sugars is generally recommended for better health.

Nutrition Claims

Be skeptical of bold nutrition claims on the front of packaging as these can be marketing tactics. Always confirm the claims by reviewing the actual nutrition label.

Powered by: **PlaybookWriter.com**