



Nutrition

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Up Your Nutrition IQ

Learn the meaning behind popular food labels.

More and more people are learning to read the labels when grocery shopping. But do you know what all the terms mean? We decode a few of the more confusing food label phrases.

Reduced fat vs. low-fat. “Reduced fat” doesn’t mean low-fat. Nor does it mean low-calorie. For a food to earn the “low-fat” label, no more than 30 percent of calories can come from fat. “Reduced fat” means the product has 25 percent less fat than the full-fat version. You can find reduced-fat versions of everything from crackers to ice cream to cookies. So while reduced-fat versions of healthy foods like milk, cheese or peanut butter can be a somewhat better alternative to the full-fat versions – but not really recommended – reduced-fat junk food is still a good way to derail your diet.

No added sugar vs. sugar-free. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, “no sugar added” simply means that there was no additional sugar or ingredients with sugar that were added during the food’s production process. So large amounts of natural sugars may still be present. To be truly sugar-free, there must be less than 0.5 grams of sugar per serving.

Trans-fat free vs. fat-free. Many products now boast that they are free of trans fat. Artificial trans fat is found in foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils such as shortening and hard margarine and is often found in processed foods like baked goods, frozen pizza and snack foods. Trans fat raises bad cholesterol (LDL) levels and may also lower good cholesterol (HDL) levels, increasing the risk for coronary artery disease. But just because something is free of trans fat doesn’t mean it doesn’t have unsaturated or saturated fats. To be deemed “fat-free,” a food must have fewer than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.



Video Spotlight

[Finding Balance in Diet](#)

[Why Eat Breakfast](#)

[Can Produce](#)

[Prevent Cancer](#)



Whole-grain vs. whole-wheat vs. multigrain.

Whole grain is just that – grain that remains whole during processing, with the bran, germ and endosperm intact. Examples of whole grains include brown rice, buckwheat, whole rye, whole-grain barley, oatmeal, whole-grain cornmeal and whole wheat. But just because something is made with rye, corn or whole wheat doesn't mean it is whole grain. In many cases, parts of the grain are stripped during processing (as is the case with many whole-wheat breads or corn breads). Whole-wheat flour should be considered a whole grain flour because it contains all the parts of the grain – the bran, endosperm and germ. Multigrain products don't guarantee the grains used are whole – just that a variety of grains are used. What is the advantage of eating whole-grain foods? According to the FDA, eating three one-ounce servings of whole grains each day can reduce risk for many chronic conditions.

All-natural vs. organic. Many grocery stores have designated “organic” or “natural foods” sections. But

what's the difference? Organic foods are certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and are made with “only organically produced ingredients and processing aids.” In other words, there were no chemicals like fertilizer or pesticides added to the foods or used in production, a practice that is designed to promote ecological balance and conserve biodiversity. In addition, radiation and genetic engineering cannot be used. If a product is certified organic, it will be labeled USDA Organic. “Natural” foods do not need to be certified (with the exception of meat and poultry, which are certified natural by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service). The term is used to market foods that are made with no chemicals or artificial ingredients (i.e. all-natural peanut butter that contains only natural ingredients like peanuts, sugar, oil and salt). In both cases, it is important to remember that “organic” and “all-natural” do not automatically equate with healthy, low-calorie or low-fat. Organic cookies and pizza might have the same amount of fat and calories (or more!) as the processed versions.



Three Surprising Superfoods

These three foods not on your health radar? They should be. Learn about the many health benefits of mushrooms, quinoa, and pistachio nuts.

You know these foods are good for you, but did you know how good? Mushrooms, pistachio nuts and quinoa may not appear on every top-10 list, but they are packed with nutrients and surprising health benefits your mom never told you about.

The magical mushroom

Although they are not rich in color, mushrooms offer a wealth of nutrients. They are loaded with copper, B vitamins, potassium, and antioxidants. Best of all, one serving provides all this nutrition with only 20 calories and 0 grams of fat.

Mushroom varieties include the popular white button, crimini, shiitake, and portabella varieties. Each has its own unique flavor.

Depending on the type, mushrooms can be enjoyed raw, cooked, or dried. Hearty, yet low in calories, these nutritious wonders taste great in salads, soups, and stews.

Most surprising fact: Mushrooms as medicine have been used for centuries in Asian cultures. Today, maitake and shiitake mushrooms are being studied for potential cancer-fighting properties. Studies are being done to see if the shiitakes may also help to boost the immune system and fight heart disease.

The smiling pistachio

The shells of these perfectly ripened nuts split open naturally, revealing a rich-tasting, delicious lime-green kernel. They have been nicknamed “laughing pistachios” because they look like they’re smiling at you!

Pistachios are a good source of plant protein, fiber, and monounsaturated fat. Just a half cup, before shelling, boasts a solid nutrient profile. When kept refrigerated or frozen, you can store them for as long as a year. Avoid buying red or green pistachios, which are artificially colored.

Most surprising fact: You probably know that nuts provide health benefits. What you may not know is that pistachios rank as one of the most popular nuts that contain high amounts of phytosterols. These are substances that are known to help lower cholesterol in your body.

The quiet quinoa

Never heard of it? Quinoa is a grain with a fluffy, creamy, slightly crunchy texture, and a nutty flavor when cooked. Until recently, quinoa was found only in health food stores. But its quick cooking time and gluten-free status has made it more popular. The grain is now widely sold in most supermarkets.

Quinoa is also a good source of calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, copper, zinc, iron, and fiber. Aside from all these nutrients, it can be ready to eat in about 15 minutes, as compared to 45 minutes for other whole grains.

Quinoa is delicious cold as a grain salad, or warm as a side dish or pilaf. Some enjoy it as a hot breakfast cereal instead of oatmeal.

Most surprising fact: Not only is quinoa higher in protein than other grains, but the protein it supplies is complete protein. This means that it includes all nine essential amino acids, just like animal protein

Why Kids Overeat and How You Can Help Them Stop

Overeating in kids can lead to obesity. Learn how to prevent overeating and to help your child maintain a healthy weight.

Overweight and obese kids face serious health concerns. The extra weight puts kids and teens at risk for many health problems, including high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. Eating too much and exercising too little may lead to extra weight gain. By understanding why kids overeat, you can help your child get on the right path to a healthy weight.

Why do kids overeat?

Kids and teens overeat for several reasons:

- ▶ **Frequent snacking.** Sometimes kids snack because they are bored, depressed, anxious, or stressed. Or snacking is just something to do while watching TV. Try to limit snacks to two a day. Buy fewer high-fat and high-sugar snacks. And offer healthy snack choices such as fruit, carrot or celery sticks, low-fat yogurt, and light microwave popcorn. Limit screen time – watching TV or playing video games – and encourage physical activity to relieve boredom or stress. Also, talk with your children about whatever is bothering them. Help them find healthy ways to deal with emotions so they don't need to reach for food to feel better.
- ▶ **Skipping meals.** If your child skips a meal, especially breakfast, he or she will be hungry, tired, and more likely to snack on less healthy foods later in the day, as well as overeat. Make sure your child eats three balanced meals a day by serving a variety of nutritious foods and drinks. Offer low-fat milk and water, and limit sugary drinks like juice and soda. Also, try to have meals at the same time every day. If your child knows dinner will be served at a certain time, he or she may be less likely to snack too much beforehand.



- ▶ **Larger portion sizes.** Portion sizes have gotten larger both at home and at restaurants. By serving larger portions, you may be encouraging your child to eat more than he or she needs. To keep portion sizes in check and limit weight gain, prepare your child's plate with smaller servings. And let your child ask for more food if he or she is still hungry. Also, eat meals together as a family. This family time allows you to encourage healthy eating habits and to keep an eye on what and how much your child is eating.
- ▶ **Eating out.** Busy families often eat out, especially on weekends. Kids – and adults – tend to overeat at fast-food restaurants with their “super-sized” portions of fries and at all-you-can-eat buffets with unlimited helpings of food and dessert. Most children can enjoy all foods if they are eaten in moderation. Encourage your child to choose small-sized fries or one small helping of each food choice. Remember, it's important to continue healthy eating habits and portion control when eating out.

Healthy eating and regular physical activity habits are key to maintaining a healthy weight. Help your child on his or her path toward wellness and better health by preventing overeating.



Fill Up Not Out

Fiber is essential for digestion, and studies show that extra roughage may help you lose weight.

Let's be honest – it's hard to get excited about fiber. We know it's good for our insides, but what about our outsides? Research shows that eating more fiber can help prevent weight gain and promote weight loss. One reason: Fiber expands in the digestive tract, creating a feeling of fullness. Here are some ways you can fill up on fiber.

- ▶ **Break It Up:** Grind flax seed, bran cereal and nuts in a food processor and add to baked goods, casseroles and salads.
- ▶ **Keep the Skin On:** Wash apples and potatoes, but skip peeling them. You'll up your fiber intake by eating the skin.

- ▶ **Bulk Up on Beans:** Get your fill of fiber-rich beans by eating chili, burritos, and hummus.
- ▶ **Go Wild:** Opt for wild or brown rice instead of plain white.

Ramping up gradually will be easiest on your system, and if you've had digestive problems, your doctor may have advice about how much fiber to eat.

