

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for February 7, 2022
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about food labels, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

Sometimes eating can be confusing. Well, maybe not eating, but choosing what to eat. There must be a study out there somewhere on the average number of words on a modern food package. I conducted my own non-scientific poll with the help of my icebound children. We randomly selected five packages of different sizes from the pantry and counted every word. Total words ranged from 184 to 469 with an average of 302 words. No wonder we have information overload!

There are many rules food companies must follow including the location of specific information on a package and even what size font it can be. There are lots of different label claim options that are required or allowed to be put on a food label. Today we'll look at a few of these.

Nutrition facts: This is a requirement on almost all packaged foods. It is typically found on the side panel of a box or the back of a bag. Each nutrition facts panel must identify the size of one serving and tell how many servings are in the package. Then information is listed for calories with large font to make it obvious compared to the other numbers listed. The "% DV" is percent of daily value based on a 2,000 calorie diet, which is average amount that most adults need. A rule of thumb is that below 5 percent means a low percentage of daily value and above 20 percent is a high daily value. In general, look for higher percentages of dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, and potassium. Look for lower percentages of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.

Gluten free: Gluten is a mixture of proteins that occur naturally in wheat, but also in barley and rye. An estimated 0.5 to 1 percent of Americans have celiac disease, which is inherited autoimmune disorder that affects the digestive process of the small intestine. When they eat gluten, it inhibits the absorption of important nutrients into the body.

When a food label says "gluten free" it must contain less than 20 ppm (parts per million) of gluten as this is what the FDA recognizes as the lowest level that can be detected in foods using

valid scientific analytical tools. Foods that are labeled gluten-free are not healthier than other foods for anyone who does not have celiac disease or a severe non-celiac gluten sensitivity.

Contains Bioengineered Ingredients or Partially Produced with Genetic Engineering:

Genetically modified organisms (GMOs) were introduced to the food market over 25 years ago. Currently there are 8 GMO food crops commercially produced in the United States including: corn, soybeans, canola, sugar beets, papaya, and specific varieties of summer squash, apples, and potatoes.

A law passed in 2016 requires that as of January 1 of this year any food containing ingredients from genetically modified food must have a disclosure on the label. The law's designated term is "bioengineered food." There are also options for QR codes to share this information.

You may wonder if there are only 8 food crops that are bioengineered, how many food products could possibly need labeled? It is surprising how many foods contain ingredients from corn and soy and sugar beets. At this point about over 90 percent of corn and soybeans and 99 percent of sugar beets grown in the US are GMO. A majority of processed and packaged foods are made with these ingredients, and even if they contain just a small amount of an ingredient the package will contain this statement.

You can learn more about food labeling by visiting go.osu.edu/understandfoodlabels

And now let's look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. Have you ever thought about making food in your home to sell directly from your home or maybe at the Farmers Market or another retail location? I will be teaching a Cottage Foods Rules and Labeling class on March 15 from 6:30-8:00 pm. You can find details about this program and future programs related to financial wellness, food preservation, diabetes, and more at our website coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!