

FOOD PACKAGING CLAIMS



Have you ever bought a food because the package said the item was “low-sodium” or “low-fat” or made some other claim? It’s important to understand what these claims mean so you can make informed decisions about the food you buy for yourself and your family.

There are three categories of claims defined by statute and/or FDA regulations that can be used on food and dietary supplement labels:

1. health claims,
2. nutrient content claims, and
3. structure/function claims.

A “health claim” by definition has two essential components:

1. A substance (whether a food, food component, or dietary ingredient) and
2. A disease or health-related condition.

“Nutrient content claims” are used for two purposes:

1. To describe the level of a nutrient in the product using terms such as free, high, and low or
2. To compare the level of a nutrient in a food to another food using terms such as more, reduced, and lite.

Calories

If a food claims to be...

It means that one serving contains...

Calorie Free

Less than 5 calories

Low Calorie

40 calories or less

Reduced calorie

At least 25% less calories than the regular product

Sugar

If a food claims to be...

It means that one serving contains...

Sugar Free

Less than 0.5 grams sugars and no ingredient that is a sugar

Reduced Sugar or Less Sugar

At least 25% less sugars than the regular product

No Added Sugar

No sugar or sugar-containing ingredient added during processing or packaging

Fat

If a food claims to be...

It means that one serving contains...

Fat Free

Less than 0.5 g fat and no ingredient that is fat

Low Fat

3 g of fat or less (and not more than 30% of calories from fat for meals and main dishes)

Reduced Fat or Less Fat

At least 25% less fat than the regular product

Low in Saturated Fat

1 g or less of saturated fat, and 15% or less of the calories coming from saturated fat (10% or less for meals and main dishes)

Lean

Less than 10 g of fat, 4.5 g of saturated fat and 95 mg of cholesterol

Extra Lean

Less than 5 g of fat, 2 g of saturated fat and 95 mg of cholesterol

Light (lite)

At least 50% less fat than the regular product (or 1/3 fewer calories if less than 50% of calories are from fat)

Cholesterol

If a food claims to be...

It means that one serving contains...

Cholesterol Free

Less than 2 mg of cholesterol and no ingredient that contains cholesterol

Low Cholesterol

20 mg or less of cholesterol

Reduced Cholesterol

At least 25% less cholesterol than the regular product

Fiber

If a food claims to be...

It means that one serving contains...

High fiber or excellent source of fiber

20% or more of the Daily Value (DV) for fiber

Good source of fiber

10-19% of the Daily Value (DV) for fiber

Sodium

If a food claims to be...

It means that one serving contains...

Sodium free, salt free or no sodium

Less than 5 mg of sodium and no ingredient that is sodium chloride or contains sodium

Very low sodium

35 mg or less of sodium

Low sodium

140 mg or less of sodium

Reduced or less sodium

At least 25% less sodium than the regular product

Light or lite in sodium

At least 50% less sodium than the regular product

Lightly salted

50% less sodium than normally added

No salt added or unsalted

No salt added during processing. If the food is not sodium free, the statement "not a sodium free food" or "not for control of sodium in the diet" must also appear on the label.