



Deciphering Food Labels

Maintaining a proper weight and good health is so important for people with bleeding disorders for some very good reasons:

1. Better overall health
2. Helps prevent and control disease
3. Reduces stress and impact on joints
4. Less factor is needed for individuals who are at an ideal weight

Good eating habits play a big part in the maintenance of a healthy weight. A healthy diet is one that includes lots of whole foods (especially fruits and vegetables), few processed or refined foods and very little sugar.

Reading food labels is a great way to find out exactly what is in the food you are buying. But there are a lot of words and terms used that can confuse consumers. The below article, Misleading Food Labels, by Amy Paturel was originally published on the Arthritis Foundation's website to help clarify some common food labels that sound healthy but may actually be misleading.

For more information on healthy eating with a bleeding disorder visit: www.hemophiliafed.org/programs/fitfactor/



Sticking to the perimeter of the store, where healthier whole foods are displayed, is your best bet when grocery shopping, but it's hard to avoid packaged foods altogether -- especially when many labels promise everything from a slimmer figure to better health. Here are some common health claims you'll see on labels, and the truth behind them.

The claim: High fiber

The truth: Products carrying the “high fiber” claim contain at least 5 grams of fiber per serving. But manufacturers sometimes process dietary fiber out of a product and then add processed fiber, so it's not as healthful as it seems. What's more, even seemingly nutritious products like yogurt with supplemental fiber may have a lot of added sugar, says Alicia Romano, clinical registered dietitian at Tufts Medical Center.

What you can do: Choose products with bran, oats or other whole grains, and check the sugar content. Ingredients including inulin, polydextrose or maltodextrin suggest fiber is added.

The claim: Low-fat

The truth: Items labeled “low-fat” must contain fewer than 3 grams of fat per serving. But if you're trying to lose weight, fat is only one part of the equation. If the ingredients include refined grains, added sugar or high-calorie fillers, the product may be less nutritious and no better at helping with weight-loss than the full-fat version.

What you can do: Research shows that having some fat in your diet is good, but when you're scanning labels, look for “unfats,” suggests Romano, including polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats, which are healthier than saturated fats. Avoid trans fats.

...continued on next page

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The claim: No added sugar

The truth: Whether sugar is added or not, a food may sport a hefty dose of the sweet stuff, which adds calories and can lead to inflammation. Manufacturers often replace sugar with substitutes that have the same effects, such as honey, molasses or corn syrup, says Bonnie registered dietitian Taub-Dix, author of *Read It Before You Eat It* (Plume, 2010). Even “all natural” fruit juice is full of naturally-occurring sugars that can send blood sugar levels soaring.

What you can do: Look at total grams of sugar in the nutrition facts label. Anything above 15 grams is best left on the shelf.

The claim: Antioxidant-rich

The truth: Although scientists are increasingly recognizing that certain foods have powerful anti-inflammatory properties, they don't know what levels of antioxidants are beneficial. Plus, isolating a particular antioxidant, like vitamin C, rules out the synergistic effects of foods' other nutrients, says Romano.

What you can do: Eat a variety of antioxidant-rich whole foods, including a rainbow of deeply hued fruits and vegetables.

The claim: Heart healthy

The truth: The American Heart Association requires foods with this claim to be low in total fat, have no more than 20 mg of cholesterol and no more than 480 mg of sodium. But even these can be highly processed, sugar-laden and lacking in important vitamins and minerals.

What you can do: Avoid products containing more than a handful of ingredients

For more information go to: www.hemophiliafed.org/fitfactor