

Claiming Health:



Front-of-Package
Labeling of
Children's Food

PRESS KIT

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FACT SHEET

WHAT: *Claiming Health: Front-of-Package Labeling of Children's Food*, a Prevention Institute-authored study release through the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments, looked at the front-of-package labeling on fifty-eight 'better for you' products—those that manufacturers [tout as their most nutritious](#), and which they market to children under twelve. In spite of the information on the labels which imply the products are a good choice for kids, **84% of products studied with front-of-package labeling didn't meet basic nutritional standards.**

WHY: Parents drawn to products that seem healthier for their children based on the packaging are being deceived. In the face of a growing chronic disease epidemic, parents struggling to make healthier purchasing decisions might think they're making a good choice, based on packaging claims, when they're not. Currently, the front-of-package labeling system is not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration—and each company sets its own standards for front-of-package labeling. Different criteria and different labels from each company only add to the confusion, and certainly don't provide the whole nutritional story of the contents within. Front of package labeling is another barrier for parents trying to find accurate information on which to make their purchasing decisions.

HOW: Prevention Institute used the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) FOP label definition to identify products with front-of-package labels. The study began with the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative's (CFBAI) product list, which contains products that manufacturers have determined meet certain self-developed nutrition criteria. Manufacturers agree to limit their advertising to children under 12 to products on the list. After visiting local grocery stores and reviewing the packaging of CFBAI-approved products, researchers found that 58 contained FOP labels.

ACTION: **Prevention Institute and Strategic Alliance are calling for the FDA to step in and require uniform labeling standards for all products that use front-of-package labels, to provide parents with accurate, comparable and useful information about the best products for their children.**

WHERE: A full copy of the report, *Claiming Health*, including supporting data and images, is available on the Prevention Institute website at bit.ly/claiminghealth.

KEY FINDINGS

The study looked at the front-of-package labeling on fifty-eight ‘better for you’ products—those that manufacturers [tout as their most nutritious](#), and which they are allowed to market to children under twelve. In spite of the claims on the labels, study findings revealed:

- **84% of products didn’t meet basic nutritional standards for sugar, fat, saturated fat, sodium, and fiber derived from the US Dietary Guidelines and National Academies of Science (see table, below).**
- 95% of products contained added sugar, more than half (57%) of the study products qualified as high sugar, and half (53%) were low in fiber.
- More than half the products did not contain any fruits or vegetables; of the fruits and vegetables found, half came from just 2 ingredients – tomatoes and corn.
- 24% of prepared foods were high in saturated fats.
- More than 1/3 (36%) of prepared foods & meals were high in sodium
- 21% contained artificial coloring.—additives with potentially harmful health impacts, and no benefits.






Table Nutrient Criteria				
High Fat	High Sat Fat	High Sugar	High Sodium	Low Fiber
>35% calories from fat*	>10% calories from sat fat	>25% calories from total sugars**	<u>Non-Meal Items:</u> >480mg per serving	<1.25g fiber per serving***
* Nuts, nut butters, and seeds (with no added fat) are exempt from this cut-point		** Whole fruit, 100% fruit juice, and plain milk (or milk alternatives such as soy or rice milk) are exempt from this cut-point	<u>Meal Items:</u> >600mg per serving	*** 100% fruit juice and plain milk (or milk alternatives such as soy or rice milk) are exempt from this cut-point

Among the worst offenders:

- **Dora the Explorer Fruit Shapes** calls itself “an excellent source of vitamin C, naturally flavored, 90 calories per pouch, and gluten free,” and features Dora, a popular television cartoon character, prominently on the box. 58% of this product’s calories come from sugar.
- **Kid Cuisine All Star Chicken Breast Nuggets.** The “Meal Facts” panel on this package advertises “white meat chicken, excellent source of protein, no artificial colors or flavors.” Yet this product falls into the high-fat category, with 38% of its calories from fat.
- **Apple Jacks** touts its high fiber, low fat content, but derives 48% of its calories from sugar—in fact, sugar is the primary ingredient, coming first on the ingredient list.

WHAT ARE FRONT OF PACKAGE LABELING SYSTEMS?

Since the 1995 introduction of the American Heart Association's heart-healthy symbol, front-of-package labels — symbols that denote healthier products — have become increasingly common and are now a widely used food marketing tool. Some food and beverage manufacturers have promoted front-of-package labels as an innovative approach to healthier choices, but serious concerns exist over the potential for these symbols to confuse or mislead consumers, and encourage purchases of highly processed items. **Research suggests that consumers believe front-of-package claims, perceive them to be government endorsed, and use them in lieu of the Nutrition Facts Panel.**^{1,2}

Front-of-Package Labeling Systems		
<p>Nutrient-Specific Systems</p>  <p>display on the front of the food package the amount per serving of select nutrients from the Nutrition Facts panel or use symbols based on claim criteria. A declaration of calories per serving may also be provided on the front of the food package.</p>	<p>Summary Indicator Systems</p>  <p>use a single symbol, icon, or score to provide summary information about the nutrient content of a product. No specific nutrient content information is given in these systems. The system may be based on nutrient thresholds or algorithms. Systems often use different criteria based on food categories (e.g., type of food or food product).</p> 	<p>Food Group Information Systems</p>  <p>use symbols that are awarded to a food product based on the presence of a food group or food ingredient. Some symbols indicate the presence of a serving (or partial serving) of a particular food group, while other symbols indicate the presence of ingredients considered to be important dietary components such as whole grains.</p> 

Adapted from the Institute of Medicine Report *Examination of front-of-package nutrition rating systems and symbols: Phase I report*.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Nearly 40% of total calories consumed by 2- to 18-year-olds comes from empty calories – unhealthy fats and added sugars.³
- Only 21% of children and adolescents aged 6–19 years eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.⁴
- Illness and chronic disease related to unhealthy eating and inactivity account for nearly 17% of our health care costs -- \$168 billion a year in medical costs alone.⁵
- Current projections estimate that the prevalence of diabetes in the United States will increase to between 1 in 5 and 1 in 3 adults by 2050.⁶
- 33 percent of boys and 39 percent of girls born in 2000 will develop diabetes if current trends continue.⁷
- In the past decade, the prevalence of Type II diabetes, previously known as adult-onset diabetes, has more than doubled among children and youth.⁸
- Since 1980, overweight rates in the United States have doubled among children and tripled among adolescents.⁹
- 83 percent of foods advertised during children's television programming featured packaged snack foods, fast foods, and sweets.¹⁰
- \$3 billion is spent per year on food product packaging designed for children and youth.¹¹
- Food and beverage industry expenditures are more than one thousand times greater than California's "5 a Day" programs (which promote eating five fruits and vegetables a day for better health).¹²
- Children see an average of one food ad for every five minutes of Saturday morning TV they watch.¹³

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUNDER



Claiming Health was conducted by Prevention Institute which staffs and coordinates the Strategic Alliance. Founded in 1997, **Prevention Institute** is a national non-profit organization dedicated to placing prevention at the center of efforts to improve community health, equity and well-being. Prevention Institute specializes in building capacity among community-based organizations and government agencies at the local, state, and federal level to develop strategies for environmental, policy, and systems-level changes to prevent illness and injury in the first place. Find us at www.preventioninstitute.org



The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments is a California coalition of organizations and individuals committed to promoting environmental and policy changes to support healthy eating and regular physical activity for all California residents. Strategic Alliance reframes the debate on nutrition and physical activity away from a sole focus on individual responsibility to one that examines the role of key institutions, including government and healthcare, as well as the food and beverage industry in shaping the nutrition and physical activity environment. www.eatbettermovemore.org

Strategic Alliance was formed in 2001 and its members include California's leading public health and health care, parks & recreation, transportation, and nutrition organizations.

The Strategic Alliance Steering Committee currently includes: California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit), California Center for Public Health Advocacy, California Food Policy Advocates, California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, California Park & Recreation Society, California Project LEAN, California WIC Association, Child Care Food Program Roundtable, Latino Health Access, Partnership for the Public's Health, Prevention Institute, Samuels & Associates, and YMCA of the East Bay.

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² Food & Drug Administration. Consumer research on food labels. Available at: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/ScienceResearch/ResearchAreas/ConsumerResearch/ucm080407.htm>. Accessed December 8, 2010.

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⁶ <http://www.pophealthmetrics.com/content/8/1/29>

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⁹ National Center for Health Statistics, *Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 1999-2002*. Accessed January 18, 2007, available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hestats/overwght99.htm>.

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