

# Deciphering Food Labels



 **Bikini-Belly** *Cleanse*

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The information provided in this program is for general educational purposes, has not been reviewed nor approved by the FDA and is not intended to take the place of advice from your medical professional, licensed dietician or nutritionist.

You are solely responsible for your health care and activity choices. Participation in this challenge does not constitute a client-coach relationship.

*“Modern food manufacturers have overwhelmed store shelves with foods that are nutrient poor, rotten, spoiled, dead, old, and contaminated with antibiotics, chemicals, and growth hormones. Refining has also brought us spectacularly cheap, pervasive, and fattening ingredients: namely white flour, white sugar, high fructose corn syrup, and industrial seed oils.*

*These fake foods distort your appetite and cause you to consume more calories than you require. This perpetuates a vicious cycle of stuffing your face but never feeling totally satisfied or nourished.”*

Abel James – Author “The Wild Diet”

# What Are Processed Foods?

Have you ever looked at the list of ingredients on a food package and realized you had no idea what they were? Food labels usually read more like a list from a science experiment than a list of ingredients we actually recognize.

You'll reap the benefits of eating healthy, whole foods even more when you also reduce processed foods. After all, you want your body to benefit as much as possible from the food you eat, right?

## So Why Not Processed Food?

Processed foods have been altered from their natural state. There are varying degrees of processed foods, from minimally processed to highly processed. Generally, the less processing a food has undergone and the fewer the ingredients in packaged products, the more nutritious it will be.

The more processing a food has gone through, the fewer nutrients it retains. This means more empty calories that provide little to no nutritional benefit.

# Processed Foods

Processed foods tend to be LOW in nutrients and HIGH in calories.

- They tend to not keep us full for very long, so we're hungry again a short time later (this increases cravings for more processed foods).
- Most are designed with convenience in mind. They can be eaten quickly, anywhere (while driving, working at the office, watching TV, etc.), and require little or no preparation.
- Highly processed foods include snack foods and desserts, such as candy, chips, ice cream, cakes, etc. This category also includes frozen entrees, sodas, breads, pasta, and cereals.
- Highly processed animal products include most deli meats, chicken nuggets, hot dogs and some sausages and burgers. Many vegetarian alternatives to meat are also highly processed.

## Minimally Processed Foods

- Fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, seeds, whole grains, meat and fish are often sold in minimally processed or non-processed forms (although each of these also have processed versions). These foods are often not substantially changed from their raw, unprocessed form and retain most of their nutritional value.



# The Effects of Food Additives

## Studies show that food additives affect the following

- Digestion
- Appetite control (or lack of – food additives increase your appetite!)
- Brain function – can cause “brain fog”
- Memory
- Weight gain
- Quality of sleep
- Concentration (as well as ADD/ADHD)
- Energy levels
- Gut flora, depleting the “good” bacteria necessary for assimilation of nutrients
- Deficiencies of micro-nutrients

**That’s really quite a list, isn’t it?**

*"Perhaps the most effective strategy in losing fat is to stop eating manmade, processed food products and start eating real food. Real food is perishable. If it can last on the shelves for extended periods of time or comes in a box, be wary."*

*Abel James – Author "The Wild Diet"*

# Nutrient Quality in Processed Foods

Processed foods can cause micronutrient deficiencies. Not consuming enough vitamins, minerals and essential fatty acids prevents us from getting the minimum daily requirement (MDR) of what our bodies need. This can lead to disease and chronic health problems.

And, processed foods are lacking in the nutrients our bodies need to function properly, especially if our goal is improved overall health and/or weight loss. It's not realistic for most of us to never eat processed foods, but it's very realistic to dramatically reduce the amount of these poor quality foods. Once healthier choices become automatic, you won't miss the processed choices because you'll be feeling so much better.

# Important Initial Step: Become More Aware of What You're Eating

Did you know that the food industry allows more than **3,000 food additives** to be used in the processing of our food? These additives are used to help improve the taste, texture, consistency and visual appeal of food as well as extend the shelf life.

'These processes can cause allergic reactions and stress on the liver to process such chemicals, many of which are cancer forming. Children exposed to such processes can become hyperactive and display learning difficulties.'

– Dr. Gillian McKeith, author, 'You Are What You Eat'

*“The best advice is to avoid foods with health claims on their labels.*

*Better yet, avoid foods with labels in the first place.*

*Industrial processing has given rise to an array of addictive, fattening, metabolism-jamming chemicals and compounds, including MSG (monosodium glutamate), aspartame, high-fructose corn syrup, and trans fats, to name the biggest offenders.*

*Researchers use MSG to study obesity.*

*It is an ‘excitotoxin’ that stimulates the brain into wanting to eat uncontrollably.*

*When fed to laboratory mice, the mice pig out and get fat.*

*MSG is in 80 percent of all processed foods, mostly disguised as a ‘natural flavoring’.*

*- Hungry for Change*

# How To Decipher Food Labels

Learning to decipher food labels is important so you can be more aware of what you're really eating and you can make the most informed decisions.

Unfortunately, the food labeling laws in this country make it difficult to determine if a food is healthy for us or not at first glance. We have to dig deeper and do a little detective work, but it's worth the effort.

The front of the package is designed to SELL you the product. It's an advertising billboard and can be VERY deceiving.

To know what's in the food you're buying, you want to read the ingredient list,  
NOT the claims on the front of the package.

*'Did you know that these convenience foods – which commonly come with unpronounceable ingredients – may come at a dangerous price? Various food additives and chemicals have shown side effects, which range from nausea and headaches to more serious conditions such as cancer, Alzheimer's and Multiple Sclerosis. Be sure to read ingredient labels carefully, and consume more whole foods!'*

*– Institute for Integrative Nutrition*

Words like 'natural', 'whole grains', 'fresh', 'fat free' and 'low fat', are most often actually what you want to avoid. Crazy, I know!

Be suspicious and dig deeper for the facts. Food companies are allowed to promote benefits on the front of the package that are not necessarily true. For example, a food can contain MSG disguised under other names (there are more than 40!), but the packaging can claim "No MSG." We'll go into the list of these other names in a bit.

Before we put any packaged items in our shopping cart, we need to ask ourselves if it's real food (example: are there only 1-5 ingredients that you recognize) or is it food-like substance (not real food, but more like a chemistry experiment). It matters very much what we put into our bodies, especially if optimal health is our goal.

It's also important to look at the sugar and sodium content. Fat can be replaced with sugar and the sodium content can be very high in processed foods since salt is used as a way to preserve food and keep it from spoiling.

# Top Offenders & Controversial Ingredients

## Watch for these and avoid them!

### HFCS

High Fructose Corn Syrup. Has been shown to damage immune function, speed up the aging process, and contribute to weight gain. Found in everything from crackers to bread, chips, yogurt and sauces. I'm amazed at how many products contain HFCS!

### Refined Sugar

People in the US consume 130 to 160 pounds of sugar per year. In other words, we are consuming half a cup of sugar a day and most of us aren't even aware of it. High consumption of sugar and the corresponding elevated insulin levels can cause weight gain, bloating, fatigue, arthritis, migraines, lowered immune function, obesity, cavities and cardiovascular disease. It can also disrupt absorption of nutrients, possibly leading to osteoporosis, depression, PMS symptoms and stress.

### Trans Fats

Trans fats are found in hydrogenated oil or partially hydrogenated oil. According to the Harvard School of Public Health, trans fats cause about 50 thousand premature heart attack deaths per year! Trans fats also increase the risk for cancer, obesity, depression, asthma, osteoporosis and more. Trans fats are found in cookies, cakes, frozen food, crackers, chips, etc. It looks like the U.S. government is finally taking steps to eliminate the use of trans fats in our food supply, so this is a step in the right direction.

# MSG

MSG stands for monosodium glutamate. You'd be very surprised to know where this substance lurks. It's usually disguised under other names like: yeast extract, autolyzed yeast extract, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, carrageenan, sodium caseinate, soy protein and a few others, including 'natural flavorings' (natural flavoring doesn't always mean MSG, but oftentimes it does). It's very common to find MSG in soups, sauces, crackers, flavored chips etc.

Studies show that mice injected with MSG increased their food intake by more than 40%. MSG is a known obesogen (causes obesity) and studies have also shown MSG to be a neurotoxin (toxic to our nervous system).

*“Not only does hydrolyzed vegetable protein (one of the names MSG is disguised as) contain three very powerful brain cell toxins – glutamate, aspartate and cysteic acid – but it also contains several known carcinogens.*

*Incredibly, the FDA does not regulate the amount of carcinogens allowed in hydrolyzed vegetable protein or the amount of hydrolyzed vegetable protein allowed to be added to food products. This substance poses an even greater danger than MSG itself.”*

- Russell Blaylock, M.D. author – ‘Excitotoxins, the Taste that Kills’

## Sulfites/Sulfates

Sulfites destroy vitamin B1, which is important for mental clarity and heart health. They are commonly found in processed lunch meats as well as beer and wine. Look for lunch meat such as Applegate Farms Organics that don't contain sulfites.

## Artificial flavors and colors

In its 58-page report, "Food Dyes: A Rainbow of Risks," The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) revealed that nine of the food dyes currently approved for use in the United States are linked to health issues ranging from cancer and hyperactivity to allergy-like reactions -- and these results were from studies conducted by the chemical industry itself.

For instance, Red # 40, which is the most widely used dye, may accelerate the appearance of immune system tumors in mice, while also triggering hyperactivity in children.

Blue # 2, used in candies, beverages, pet foods and more, was linked to brain tumors. And Yellow 5, used in baked goods, candies, cereal and more, may not only be contaminated with several cancer-causing chemicals, but it's also linked to hyperactivity, hypersensitivity and other behavioral effects in children.

These are in many products including Gatorade, sodas, frozen treats, flavored chips, fruit snacks, candy, etc.

# Artificial sweeteners

Did you know that artificial sweeteners can decrease your good gut bacteria by as much as 50%. Artificial sweeteners have also been found to spike insulin and leptin levels. This can cause weight gain even though you are drinking a zero calorie drink! Leptin is a hormone that tells your body it's full. When this hormone is over-stimulated, your body does not get the message as early that you are satiated, leading to consuming more food that you normally would.

*"The sweetness tells your brain that calories and micronutrients are coming in; however, when they don't arrive, your body shouts out for nutrients and sends you on a quest to find more."*

– Jayson and Mira Calton, Rich Food, Poor Food

## Butylated Hydroxyanisole (BHA) and Butylated Hydroxytoluene (BHT)

BHA and BHT are two food additives commonly used in the food industry to prevent oils from going rancid. Studies have shown that BHA has caused stomach-focused carcinogens in trials involving mice, hamsters and rats. The US Department of Health and Human Services has deemed BHA "reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen." BHT is slightly less harmful than BHA, but should still be replaced with safer alternatives.

## Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

GMOs are plants or animals that have had their DNA modified. In the US, the majority of the corn, wheat, soybean, cotton and canola crops are now genetically modified, and one or more of these can be found in nearly every processed food. GMOs have not been proven safe and some studies show GMOs may decrease immunity to diseases in plants as well as humans. They may also cause resistance to antibiotics and could have a negative impact on genetic function.

Plants that are genetically modified to be resistant to disease, pesticides, and insecticides could diminish the need to use these strong chemicals. Conversely, they may build up a resistance and therefore require even larger amounts of chemicals than before. For a current list of GMO foods, you can visit The Environmental Working group (EWG) at [www.ewg.org](http://www.ewg.org)

Source: The above list of food additives was adapted from The Institute for Integrative Nutrition

# So...

Looking at this list of additives, we have to wonder how our food supply has become so far removed from what nature intended. None of our great grandparents would recognize any of these 'ingredients,' that's for sure. It has become clear that the chemicals that are allowed in our foods are a big part of the health crisis in this country. It's also sad but true that these additives are allowed in our food. Some countries have banned most of these ingredients from their foods.

The good news is, we get to choose what we eat. And, the more knowledge we have, the more power we have to tip the health scale in our favor. We get to vote with our dollars every time we make a trip to the grocery store. Note: stores like Whole Foods, Trader Joes and Sprouts have a bigger selection of whole foods.

Your best bet is to stick with organic, non-GMO, unprocessed and minimally processed foods as much as possible. If you pick up a food and there is a long list of ingredients, (as a rule, that means more than 5) or you see ingredients you wouldn't find in your kitchen, put it back and find something that will contribute to, rather than deplete, your health and wellbeing.

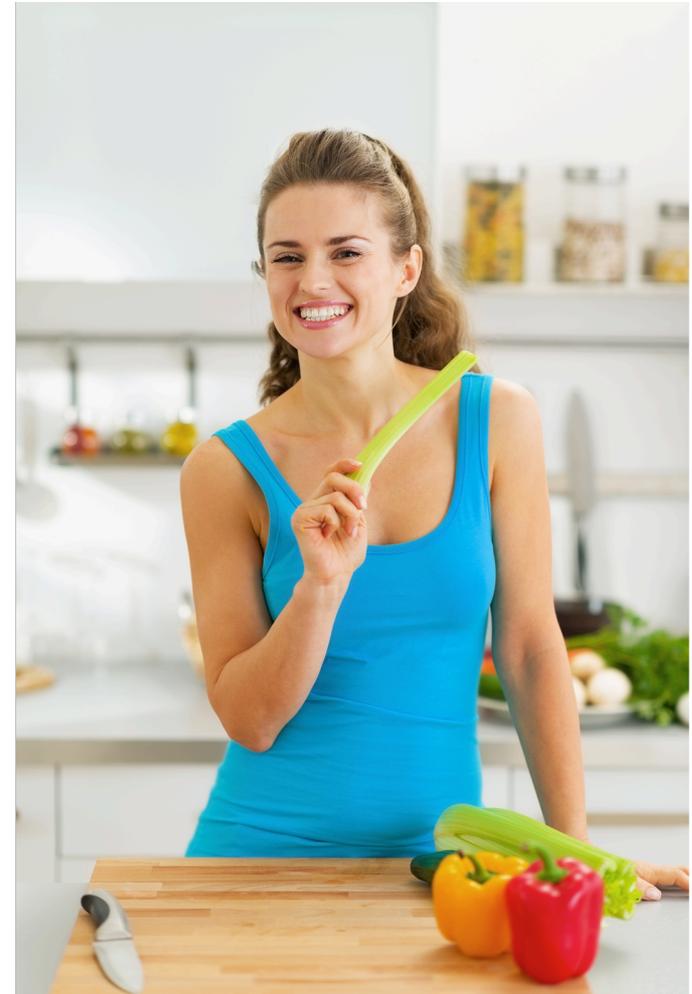
**This is where an app like 'Fooducate' can help you do the detective work.** You scan the barcode with your phone and get valuable information as to the quality of the food and help you make the best decision.

# What's Next?

Rather than feel overwhelmed with all this information  
- take on becoming more aware.

You can start with something as simple as reading food labels at the store. Maybe work on one meal at a time and implement more whole foods during the day. Decide what you want to start with first. You don't have to do it all at once. You can just start with one thing and once that's in place, move on to the next thing. You can decide you want to eliminate high fructose corn syrup, for example. Once that's in place, move on to the next one you want to eliminate.

It may not be realistic to completely eliminate ALL processed foods these days. However, the more whole foods you can add into your diet, the better. There are almost always healthier versions of what you like.



# YOU deserve the BEST Eat more REAL FOOD

*When we eat more whole foods (real food), our bodies are satisfied and, as a result, we end up consuming fewer calories and get more of what we need to stay healthy, prevent and fight illness and maintain a healthy weight range.*

*“Your health is not something you biologically lose as you age. It is something you build or give away a little each day, in what you do, and what you don’t do.”*

-Jayson Calton, PhD (author, Naked Calories)

# Get Started Today

Check out the packaged items in your pantry and read the labels to see what you find. Try the *Fooducate* app for some extra help.

Become more aware of the chemical additives in the foods you purchase by reading the ingredient list on the back of the package rather than trusting the 'billboard' advertising on the front of the package.

Find healthier alternatives to the processed foods. It doesn't have to be all at once. Just pick one or two at a time if you need to.

The processed food or ingredient I'm going to start eliminating first is:

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