



## New Food Labeling

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is making changes to the Nutrition Facts label on packaged food and drinks. The updated label incorporates the latest in scientific thinking about nutrition, dietary recommendations and the links between what people eat and chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Restaurants and vending machines will also participate with more visible nutrition facts for consumers.

“The new label will make it be easier and less time consuming to identify nutritional content,” says Sally Bonnema, registered dietitian at Bronson Methodist Hospital. “These changes will help parents make more informed decisions about what their children eat and drink to ensure a healthier lifestyle.”

### Upcoming Changes:

**Calories will be larger and bolder** – Calories will be more visible to consumers to increase awareness of calorie intake. Nutrition labels are based on general advice for 2,000 calories a day, though calorie needs will vary depending on the age, weight and activity level of your child.

Recommended calorie intake for kids:

- 4 – 8 years: 1,200 calories per day
- 9 – 13 years: 1,400 to 2,000 calories per day

**Larger serving sizes** – People are consuming more food today compared to 20 years ago. Because of this, the FDA is increasing or decreasing serving sizes to reflect how much people actually eat in today's world. “Common sense is still needed to plan and adjust a child's individual portions to their age and size,” says Bonnema. “For example, a preschooler is going to require a smaller portion of food compared to an athletic teenager.”

**Introduction of “Added Sugars”** – According to the FDA, the average American consumes 16 percent of their calories from added sugars which have little nutritional value. Labels will identify “Added Sugars” in the “Sugars” section. Purchasing products with natural sugars will be healthier than added sugars.

**Vending machine regulations** – Many vending machine operators will now be required to prominently display calorie information for their products. This will give people the opportunity to review nutrition information before a purchase and can help kids make better decisions when selecting a drink or snack.

**Restaurant requirements** – Similar to vending machines, restaurants will also be required to display nutritional facts on their menus. This will help better inform customers of what they'll be eating.

“When ordering food, focus your selection on entrees that offer a blend of fruits and/or vegetables, whole grains, protein and healthy fats,” says Bonnema.

The next time you shop for groceries or eat out at a restaurant, remember to look at the label to learn more about what you are eating. Becoming more aware is the first step towards eating healthy along with regular, moderate exercise to help your family achieve a healthier lifestyle.

\* The FDA is allowing two years for compliance with the new regulations, so you should see these changes before January 2018.

Sources: [fda.gov](http://fda.gov), [cdc.gov](http://cdc.gov), [npr.org](http://npr.org), [federalregister.gov](http://federalregister.gov)

*This article is brought to you by Bronson Children's Hospital, southwest Michigan's only children's hospital. For more information about children's health, visit [bronsonhealth.com/children](http://bronsonhealth.com/children).*