



Are You a Label Buyer?

Facts about Labelling

Fact file

The food we buy comes in all sorts of packaging, which often has a number of labels on it. Do you bother reading any of these? The New Zealand Food Regulations 1984 require manufacturers to state on the packaging what is in their products.

A label on food packaging can help you choose the best product for you by stating:

- how to prepare the product (that is, its serving instructions)
- the nutritional value of the product, for example, the amounts of fat, salt, and so on in the product
- the shelf-life of the product
- the ingredients used in making the product
- where the food comes from
- the product's weight or quantity, which helps you to work out whether that particular product gives you value for money.

Facts that the law requires to be stated on labels include:

- the name and type of food
- a list of the food's ingredients, stated in decreasing order of weight or quantity
- the food's weight or volume or the number of items in the pack
- the name and address of the manufacturer, retailer, or importer.

For some foods, further information is required on the packaging. Some of these items are:

- a date mark to show how long the food may keep or when to use it by (there must be a date mark if the food has a shelf-life of less than 90 days)
- how to store the food
- how to serve or use the food.

Nutrition labelling

Sometimes, manufacturers state nutritional values on the packaging of their foods. To be able to claim that a food is high or low in a nutrient, for example, "reduced fat", it must meet specific levels set by law.

If a nutrition claim is made on a package, there must also be a list stating the amount of energy, protein, fat, and carbohydrate, as well as the amount of the nutrient claimed.

Claims that a food is free from an additive can be made only if that food is originally allowed by law to contain that additive.



Bar codes

Bar codes are used to identify products. Each bar code is made up of lines and numbers. The first two numbers show the country of the manufacturer or packer. New Zealand's number is 94. The next five numbers identify the manufacturer and are assigned by the Product Number Association. The following five numbers identify the product (manufacturers choose these numbers).



The last number is a check number to test that the bar code scanner has read the bar code number correctly.

Bar codes help shops to work out stock numbers, and they give information about how well a particular product sells.



Taking action

Recommend special food requirements for an overweight person with osteoporosis. Investigate the dairy products most suitable for the person by looking at the nutritional information on the labels of various dairy products. Show your results in a way that will be of value to the person.

Recommend other changes to their lifestyle that the person could make.