

## Labelling Lingo

Reading and understanding food labels is an important part of educating yourself in the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.

Commonly food manufactures may use terms like “*lite*”, “*fat free*” or “*weight management*” in an effort to make their foods more appealing to the weight-conscious consumer. Unfortunately, many of these terms do not truthfully depict the nutritional content of the foods, so they can be misused by food producers and create unrealistic beliefs about what products are actually healthy. Here’s what you really should know:

<b>The Nutrition Claim</b>	<b>What it Really Means</b>
Source of Fibre	Product has 2g of fibre or more per serving specified on nutrition label
Low Fat	Less than 3g per serving specified on nutrition label
Sodium-free	Less than 5mg sodium per serving specified on nutrition label
Cholesterol-free	Less than 2mg per serving specified on nutrition label
“Light” or “Lite”	Product has to be lower in fat or lower in calories. As well, this can mean the sensory characteristics are “lighter”, for example it is lighter in colour. Tricky!



- often food producers will state that their product is “90% fat free” and many consumers assume that this means that per 100 calories of food, only 10 calories are derived from fat. In actuality the claim is based on weight. So if you ate 100 grams of food, a whole 10 grams could be composed of fat.

- Many packages will have ‘Whole wheat!’ or ‘Multigrain!’ printed across the front. Multigrain means literally that multiple grains have been used, but those grains may be from refined flours (e.g. enriched wheat flour, enriched bleached flour, unbleached wheat flour, rice flour, and durum wheat semolina). It does not mean you are getting whole grains.

**Read the ingredient list** to look for any hidden sugars, fats and chemicals, or to make sure that the product has a good amount of protein.

Overall just remember that the more you educate yourself, the easier it will become. Eventually you will be better able to identify the foods that will assist you on your path to a healthy lifestyle.

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If reading food labels seems overwhelming or confusing, you can utilize some of the resources available within the program. The dietitian at the Wharton Medical Clinic, Dan Tisi, offers a lecture called ‘Label Reading Made Easy’ where you can learn how to better understand labels. As well, the Health Canada website has an Interactive Nutrition Label and Quiz page, which can be a valuable resource: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/cons/interactive-eng.php> .