

# Promoting a Healthy Diet With Food Label Education

**CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS:** Mary Beth Vonder Meulen, RN, CCRC, University of Cincinnati; Rosellen Roche, MD, PhD, Ohio University; Eileen Seeholzer, MD, MS, Case Western Reserve University; Kate Gawlik, RN, APRN-CNP, DNP, The Ohio State University, on behalf of Team Best Practices



The ability to follow dietary recommendations is crucial for people managing chronic diseases, such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Patients who can interpret food labels have better health outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

Primary care teams can use health literacy and numeracy screening methods (e.g., [Newest Vital Sign](#) or [Single Item Literacy Screener](#)) to identify patients with limited skills and provide accessible information and plans for their health management.<sup>2,3</sup> When patients who would most benefit from healthy dietary information are identified as having low health literacy and/or numeracy, primary care teams can improve their patients’ understanding by using targeted interventions, such as teaching basic use of the Nutrition Facts Panel (NFP) and Front of Package (FOP) label.

Pictorial guides, such as Cardi-OH’s [DASH Diet Plate](#), can be used in addition to the NFP or FOP. These resources can be reviewed as part of a clinical visit, giving the patient with low health literacy and/or numeracy tools to make healthier food choices until they can connect with a registered dietitian or [Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support](#) (DSMES) provider or program.

For more information, access Cardi-OH’s expanded resource on [health literacy and numeracy](#).

**References**

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Health Literacy: Food Literacy. <https://www.cdc.gov/health-literacy/php/research-summaries/food-literacy.html>. Reviewed June 21, 2024. Accessed October 29, 2025.
- Huang YM, Shiyabola OO, Smith PD, Chan HY. Quick screen of patients’ numeracy and document literacy skills: the factor structure of the Newest Vital Sign. *Patient Prefer Adherence*. 2018;12:853-859. doi:10.2147/ppa.s165994.
- Morris, NS, MacLean CD, Chew LD, Littenberg B. The single item literacy screener: evaluation of a brief instrument to identify limited reading ability. *BMC Fam Pract*. 2006;7(21).doi:10.1186/1471-2296-7-21.
- U.S. Food & Drug Administration. How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label. <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label>. Reviewed March 5, 2024. Accessed October 29, 2025.
- Consumer Brands Association. Facts Up Front. <http://www.factsupfront.org>. Accessed October 29, 2025.

## Nutrition Facts Panel

Patients can be taught to use Percent Daily Value (%DV) on the updated NFP to determine whether a food serving is high ( $\geq 20\%$  DV) or low ( $\leq 5\%$  DV).

- Servings Per Container
- % Daily Value (%DV)
- Serving size
- Calories

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
Serving size 1 cup (227g)	
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>280</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 9g	12%
Saturated Fat 4.5g	23%
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 35mg	12%
<b>Sodium</b> 850mg	37%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 6g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
<b>Protein</b> 15g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 320mg	25%
Iron 1.6mg	8%
Potassium 510mg	10%

← HIGH  
← HIGH  
← LOW  
← LOW  
← HIGH

## Front of Package Label

The simplified FOP label can be taught to help patients understand key information about calories, saturated fat, sodium, and sugar.<sup>4,5</sup>

PER 1/2 CUP

<b>240</b> CALORIES	<b>6g</b> SAT FAT 30% DV	<b>560mg</b> SODIUM 23% DV	<b>3g</b> TOTAL SUGARS
------------------------	--------------------------------	----------------------------------	---------------------------

Adapted from *Facts Up Front*<sup>5</sup>

The Ohio Cardiovascular and Diabetes Health Collaborative is funded by the Ohio Department of Medicaid and administered by the Ohio Colleges of Medicine Government Resource Center. The views expressed in this document are solely those of the authors and do not represent the views of the state of Ohio or federal Medicaid programs.

For more information head to [CARDI-OH.org](#).

© 2022 Cardi-OH