

MCNER and NOVAfit! present:

Wellness @ Work

Session 1.

Beyond the Buzzwords: Decoding Food Labels for Smarter, Healthier Choices



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Schedule a nutrition counseling session with a MCNER dietitian



Only 1 spots left for next event

Thursday November 20, 2025

Time: 12-12:45 pm (in-person session only)

Location: Haverford Room, Connelly Center

Email MCNER at mcner@villanova.edu to reserve your spot!

Topic: **What's for Dinner? 30-Minute Meals Made Easy (and Healthy!)**

What's for dinner? Everyone's favorite question! Join us for an in-person event where we will discuss and demo building a balanced meal. Learn strategies to make healthy dinners feel do-able, even on busy nights. Spots limited - food samples included!

Presenter: Ashley Mayes MS, RDN, LDN, CDCES



Villanova.edu/mcner

MacDonald Center for Nutrition Education and Research (MCNER)



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Chat and Q&A and Recording

The chat box will remain open.

Please submit question **via the Q&A box**. Questions will be answered at the end of the presentation. Remaining questions can be sent to ashley.mayes@villanova.edu if we do not have enough time to answer all questions.

This presentation is being recorded. The slide presentation and recording will be placed on our Wellness at Work webpage within the next week.

MCNER Virtual Programming Code of Conduct

MCNER is committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all participants in our learning community.

MCNER has zero-tolerance for any form of discrimination, harassment, or disrespectful behavior. All participants are expected to behave with common courtesy and civility; conduct themselves in a professional, ethical, and respectful manner; and avoid engaging in or facilitating any discriminatory or harassing behavior.

Presenter Introduction



Ashley Mayes MS, RD, LDN, CDCES
Employee Wellness Dietitian
MacDonald Center for Nutrition Education and
Research
Fitzpatrick College of Nursing
Villanova University

Wellness @ Work

SESSION 1

Beyond the Buzzwords: Decoding Food Labels for Smarter, Healthier Choices

Let's Dive In!



Food Labels Explained

In the U.S., front-of-package (FOP) claims on food labels fall into two categories:

Regulated by the FDA or USDA

- FDA (for most packaged foods) or USDA (for meat, poultry, and some egg products).

Unregulated or loosely regulated (marketing language)

Regulated: Nutrient Content Claims

Describes a level of
nutrient in a product

Claim	Meaning
Low Fat	≤3grams fat per serving
Fat-free	<0.5grams fat per serving
Sugar-free	<0.5grams sugar per serving
Good source of	10-19% of Daily Value (DV)
High in	≥20% of Daily Value (DV)
Reduced	At least 25% less than reference food

Regulated: Health Claims



Can Help
Lower 
cholesterol*

*Three grams of soluble fiber daily from whole grain oat foods, like Cheerios cereal, in a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. Cheerios cereal provides 1 gram per serving.

Health Claims link a food or nutrient to a reduced risk of disease. They need to be pre-approved by the FDA and backed by **significant scientific agreement**.

- “Diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease.”
- “Adequate calcium throughout life may reduce the risk of osteoporosis.”
- **Note:** These must use specific wording and meet eligibility criteria (e.g., saturated fat and sodium limits)

Regulated: Qualified Health Claims

These are based on **limited scientific evidence** and require a qualifying statement:

- “supportive but not conclusive research shows that eating EPA and DHA omega-3 fatty acids may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease.”
- Must be pre-approved by the FDA with disclaimer language



Loosely Regulated: Structure Function Claims

Describe how a nutrient affects the body, but without referencing disease

- “calcium builds strong bones”
- “fiber helps maintain regularity”
- Must be “truthful and not misleading.” Must be accompanied by “this statement has not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.”

Unregulated or Loosely Regulated

Claim	Notes
Natural	Not formally defined by FDA
Superfood	No legal meaning
Lightly sweetened	Not defined by the FDA
Plant-based	No official definition
Non-GMO	Voluntary, may be verified by third parties. Not required/defined by FDA

Clever Marketing: No added hormones

Beef and cattle: Hormones CAN be legally used to promote growth or milk production. No added hormones means the animal was raised without synthetic hormones

Poultry and pork: federal law prohibits the use of hormones. “No added hormones” on these products is unnecessary, purely marketing.



Clever marketing continued

Cholesterol free or No cholesterol

- Cholesterol is only found in animal products
- All plant-based products are cholesterol free

Gluten free

- Gluten is found in wheat, barley and rye
- Foods naturally free of wheat, barley and rye should be gluten free (unless cross-contaminated)

Keto friendly/low carb

- Keto means contains very little carbs, not a regulated term
- Food may be naturally low in carbohydrates

Uncured

- Typically includes celery seed powder – a natural source of nitrates and nitrites (this does “cure” the product)



Clever marketing continued

“All natural”

“Made with real ingredients”

“No artificial preservatives”

“Organic,” “clean,” or “wholesome”

Packaging with leaves, farms, or earthy colors

Why does this matter?

The appeal to Nature Fallacy: a mistaken belief that something is better, safer or healthier simply because it is natural.

The Halo Effect: Believing a product is “good” based on your overall impression of it.

Nutritional quality depends on food's nutrient composition – calories, vitamins, sugar, fat, sodium, fiber



IMPORTANT

KEEP IN A COOL, DRY PLACE.

This product should not be exposed to dampness, heat or placed near drugs, oils, tobacco, or anything from which the product could absorb odors. Store and display in a clean, sanitary, pest-free environment separated from goods which may harbor pests, such as pet food and bird seed. Do not sell any of our goods which do not satisfy these conditions. Please notify us with complete information of such circumstances.

Nutrition Facts

36 servings per container

Serving size 1 package (42g)

Amount per serving
Calories 210

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 12g

Saturated Fat 4.5g

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol <5mg

Sodium 135mg

Total Carbohydrate 24g

Dietary Fiber 2g

Total Sugars 22g

Includes 21g Added Sugars

Protein 4g

Vitamin D 0mcg

Calcium 40mg

Iron 1.2mg

Potassium 150mg

*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS: MILK CHOCOLATE (SUGAR, COCOA BUTTER, CHOCOLATE, SKIM MILK, MILK FAT, LACTOSE, LECITHIN (SOY), PGPR), PEANUTS, SUGAR, DEXTROSE, SALT, TBHQ & CITRIC ACID (TO MAINTAIN FRESHNESS), GI-0 CONTAINS: PEANUTS, MILK, SOY.

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INGREDIENTS: ORGANIC MILK CHOCOLATE (ORGANIC EVAPORATED CANE SUGAR, ORGANIC CACAO BEANS*, ORGANIC FULL CREAM MILK, ORGANIC COCOA BUTTER*), ORGANIC SUNFLOWER LECITHIN (EMULSIFIER), ORGANIC PEANUT BUTTER (ORGANIC GROUND PEANUTS), ORGANIC CANE SUGAR, ORGANIC PEANUT FLOUR, ORGANIC PALM OIL, SEA SALT, ORGANIC SUNFLOWER LECITHIN.

CONTAINS MILK AND PEANUTS. PRODUCED ON EQUIPMENT THAT ALSO PROCESSES TREE NUTS.

*RAINFOREST ALLIANCE CERTIFIED
Find out more at ra.org

Nutrition Facts

Serving size
1 Pack (40g)

Calories
per serving 230

Amount/serving	% Daily Value	Amount/serving	% Daily Value
Total Fat 15g	19%	Total Carb. 20g	7%
Sat. Fat 8g	40%	Fiber 1g	4%
Trans Fat 0g		Total Sugars 16g	
Cholesterol 5mg	2%	Incl. 16g Added Sugars	32%
Sodium 120mg	5%	Protein 4g	
Vitamin D 0% • Calcium 2% • Iron 2% • Potassium 2%			

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INGREDIENTS: WATER, SUGAR, HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP, CORN SYRUP, CONTAINS LESS THAN 2% OF CITRIC ACID, GUAR GUM, XANTHAN GUM, NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS, YELLOW 5, YELLOW 6, RED 40, BLUE 1.

Nutrition Facts				
9 servings per container				
Serving Size		2 Twin Pops (126g)		
Amount per serving		2 Pops	1 Pop	
Calories		80	40	
	% Daily Value*			
Total Fat	0g	0%	0g	0%
Saturated Fat	0g	0%	0g	0%
Trans Fat	0g		0g	
Cholesterol	0mg	0%	0mg	0%
Sodium	0mg	0%	0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate	22g	8%	11g	4%
Dietary Fiber	0g	0%	0g	0%
Total Sugars	22g		11g	
Includes Added Sugars	22g	44%	11g	22%
Protein	0g		0g	
Vitamin D	0mcg	0%	0mcg	0%
Calcium	9mg	0%	3mg	0%

MADE WITH Simple Ingredients

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size1 Pop (54g)

Amount per serving

Calories45

% Daily Value*

Total Fat0g0%

Saturated Fat0g0%

Trans Fat0g

Cholesterol0mg0%

Sodium0mg0%

Total Carbohydrate11g4%

Dietary Fiber0g0%

Total Sugars10g

Includes 10g Added Sugars20%

Protein0g

Vitamin D0mcg0%

Calcium0mg0%

Iron0mg0%

Potassium0mg0%

* The % Daily Values (DV) tell you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

INGREDIENTS:

Purified Water, Organic Cane Sugar, Natural Flavors, Organic Fruit and Vegetable Juice for Color, Citric Acid, Organic Orange Juice Concentrate, Organic Cherry Juice Concentrate, Organic Stabilizer (Organic Guar Gum, Organic Gum Acacia), Organic Spirulina Extract for Color, Organic Turmeric for Color, Organic Natural Flavors, Salt.

* Manufactured on equipment that process products containing milk, coconut, and soy.

Manufactured and Distributed by: JonnyPops, LLC, 13512 Business Cir Dr NW Elk River, MN 55330

JonnyPops.com 651.243.6706

JonnyPops

Certified Organic by QAI

Nutrition facts vs. Ingredients

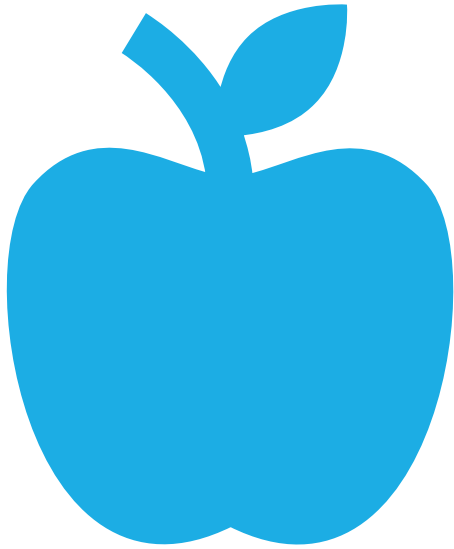
Correlation vs. Causation

The popsicles have about the same calories and added sugars per serving

They have noted differences when comparing ingredients. Does this matter? It depends!

- Red 40, Yellow 6, Blue 1: Evidence linking these ingredients to adverse health outcomes is mixed and/or insufficient.
- Many of the adverse findings come from animal or in-vitro studies often using higher than normal consumption doses.
- The studies on behavior show associations in susceptible children – not all children.
- Many of these dyes are found in **ultra-processed foods** (candies, sodas, snack foods). Therefore, blaming the dye in isolation is difficult.

Front of Package Updates



The FDA proposed a “Nutrition Info box” on the front of the packaged foods.

- Saturated fat
- Sodium
- Added Sugar
- Calories not required, but optional.

Do you find this helpful?

Healthiest

Nutrition Info		
Per serving	% Daily Value	
Saturated Fat	4%	Low
Sodium	4%	Low
Added Sugars	15%	Med
FDA.gov		

Nutrition Info		
Per serving	% Daily Value	
Saturated Fat	4%	Low
Sodium	4%	Low
Added Sugars	15%	Med
FDA.gov		

Middle

Nutrition Info		
Per serving	% Daily Value	
Saturated Fat	4%	Low
Sodium	15%	Med
Added Sugars	15%	Med
FDA.gov		

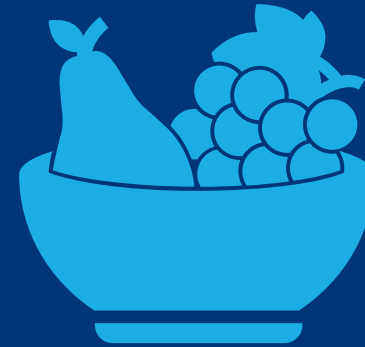
Nutrition Info		
Per serving	% Daily Value	
Saturated Fat	4%	Low
Sodium	15%	Med
Added Sugars	15%	Med
FDA.gov		

Least Healthy

Nutrition Info		
Per serving	% Daily Value	
Saturated Fat	25%	High
Sodium	25%	High
Added Sugars	15%	Med
FDA.gov		

Nutrition Info		
Per serving	% Daily Value	
Saturated Fat	25%	High
Sodium	25%	High
Added Sugars	15%	Med
FDA.gov		

Q&A



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Ashley.mayes@villanova.edu

Additional concerns or questions, please email MCNER Director
Rebecca Shenkman, MPH, RDN, LDN
rebecca.shenkman@villanova.edu

Thank you!

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