

Weight Loss - Do You Know What You're Eating

Imagine we live in an era where nearly everything you could purchase at the grocery store has full nutritional labels, in order for us to be educated on exactly what it is we're ingesting. How many of us read those labels? Furthermore of the few that actually do read the labels how many of you really understand everything you're reading? Yes companies now are obligated to disclose their products' nutritional information but it seems they found a way to confuse us even more than when there weren't any labels. Have no fear because by time you're finished reading you'll not only be able to interpret these labels but you will be a fully fledged label reading expert. First and foremost, get to know the ingredients! Many people still don't know that the ingredients are listed in their order of relevance to the product. If you read a label and sugar is listed first, that would mean that the majority of this product is made of sugar. A great rule to know when dealing with labels is to never purchase a product that has any of the following words listed in its first five ingredients. These words are high fructose corn syrup, sugar, animal fat, enriched and partially hydrogenated oil. High fructose corn syrup and sugar are two ingredients that will spike your insulin level causing fat storage, as well as heart disease. Animal fat is self explanatory, it's 100% saturated fat, which your body has no nutritional use for. Enriched is a little trickier. What enriched entails is the company takes all of the good nutrients out of the product and replaces a small amount. Anything that needs to be enriched is obviously not good enough in the first place. Hydrogenated oil is a fat compound used to replace real oil in products and acts as a preservative. The problem is our bodies do not know how to metabolize it and it ends up just sitting around in our bodies and clogging our arteries. Hydrogenated oils are known as trans fats. The three main macronutrients you need to understand on a label are protein, carbohydrate and fat. Protein is self explanatory in the sense that what you read is exactly what you get. Carbohydrates and fats on the other hand are a little more complicated. Let's look at fat first. On a label, fat is usually broken down into two categories, one being saturates (saturated fat) and the other being the trans (transient fats). You don't want your food to have either of these fats as neither are beneficial to your health. You do however need to have unsaturated fat. If the unsaturated fat is not listed this is how you figure its value out. You simply read the total fat and minus the value of the saturates and trans from it. The resulting number is the amount of unsaturated fat. Now let's take a look at carbohydrates. This macronutrient is also usually broken down into two sub categories, the first being fiber and the second sugar. Again we don't want sugar in our diet but this isn't as straight forward as the fat reading. In this instance we'll be given an amount of sugar but it does not necessarily mean "sugar" in can be from fruits (fructose) which is much better then plain table sugar. How we go about determining this is by going back to the ingredients and checking to see if either sugar or fruits are listed. If sugar is an ingredient then we know that the sugar reading is mainly from sugar but if fruit is listed we know that the sugar reading comes from the fructose in the fruit. Fiber as you should know, is un-dissolvable and goes right through your body without causing any detriment to your health. So when reading the carbohydrates on a label, make sure to distinguish whether the sugar is a good sugar (fructose) and if the majority of the carbohydrate is fibrous in nature before purchasing it. I know this is a lot to take in but in the long run you will not be intimidated by labels but rather empowered. Being able to read labels is a critical step needed in monitoring one's diet in any weight loss program and now you have the knowledge to do so.

About the Author

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Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>