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Make effective use of nutrition information on food labels



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1. Terminology

Claim

Claim means any representation which states, suggests or implies that a food has particular qualities relating to its origin, nutritional properties, nature, processing, composition or any other quality.

Disease risk reduction claim

Reduction of disease risk claim relates the consumption of a food or food component to the reduced risk of developing a disease or health-related condition.

Food label

A food label includes any tag, brand, mark, pictorial or other descriptive matter, written, printed, stenciled, marked, painted, embossed or impressed on, or attached to or included in, belonging to, or accompanying any food.

Nutrient comparative claim

A nutrient comparative claim is a claim that compares the nutrient levels and/or energy values of two or more foods.

Nutrient content claim

A nutrient content claim describes the level of a nutrient in a food product.

Nutrient function claim

A nutrient function claim describes the physiological role of the nutrient in growth, development and normal functions of the body.

Nutrition information panel

The nutrition information panel or NIP is a table found in one section of a food label declaring the amount of nutrients contained in the food.

Nutrition labelling

A nutrition label is a listing of the level of nutrient(s) as displayed on the food label. It is meant to provide factual information about the nutritional content of the product.

2. Introduction

Consumers gather information about the foods they purchase from a wide variety of sources. Family members, relatives, friends, the media and advertising all convey messages about different food characteristics. Information may also be found on the food product label. From a health standpoint, nutrition information on a food label is particularly important. Such information may assist consumers in making better food choices when planning their daily meals. Nutrition information on a food product label

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would include nutrition labelling and nutrition and health claims (Hawkes, 2004).

Providing nutrition information on food labels has thus been recognised as one of the strategies adopted to assist consumers in adopting healthy dietary practices. It is however essential to ensure that the information provided are accurate and truthful (WHO, 2004). Recognising the need for more effective regulation of the nutrition labels and claims on food packages, the Ministry of Health Malaysia gazetted amendments to Food Regulations 1985 in 2003 (MOH, 1985). Regulations were introduced to enable manufacturers to describe the nutritional qualities of a food product factually and informatively, thereby assisting the consumers in making informed choices of food when planning daily diets. This guide aims to assist consumers in understanding and effectively utilising the two main components of nutrition information permitted under the above mentioned Regulations (MOH, 1985), namely (1) nutrition labelling and (2) nutrition and health claims.

2.1 Understanding nutrition labelling

Nutrition labelling or nutrient declaration describes the nutrient content of a food product. The nutrients are declared as a table in one section of a food label, commonly known as a nutrition information panel or NIP (Table 14.1). Such information on nutritional quality, when factually and informatively provided, can assist the consumer in making better choices of food when planning their daily meals. Such information serves to remind the consumer to think of nutritional quality of a food in addition to other information such as ingredients, storage conditions, instructions for use and expiry

date. Nutrition labelling can be a useful educational tool (WHO, 2004; WHO/FAO, 2007a).

2.2 Nutrition labelling is compulsory for a wide variety of foods

The nutrition labelling regulations require the following foods to have compulsory nutrition labelling (MOH, 1985):

- 50 categories of commonly consumed foods, including: prepared cereal food and bread; milk products; flour confection; canned meat, fish and vegetable; canned fruit and various fruit juices; salad dressing and mayonnaise. A complete list of the foods is given in the amended regulations (MOH, 1985) (Appendix 1).
- Foods making nutrition claims.
- Foods that have been fortified or enriched with specific vitamins or minerals.

The following are examples of some foods that are exempted from the nutrition labelling requirements:

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Raw meat and poultry (except when ground), raw fish and seafood
- Foods prepared or processed at the store (bakery items, salads)
- Foods that contain very few nutrients such as coffee, tea, herbs and spices
- Alcoholic beverages

2.3 The nutrients that must be declared and the format for declaration

- Energy (calorie) (in kilocalories - kcal or kilojoules - kJ or both)

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- Protein (in gram - g)
- Carbohydrate (in gram - g)
- Fat (in gram - g)

In addition to the above, total sugars (all monosaccharides and disaccharides, in gram - g) must also be declared for ready-to-drink beverages.

The energy content of the food is to be expressed as kcal (kilocalories) per 100 g (for solid foods) or per 100 ml (for liquid foods). Similarly, the amount of protein, carbohydrate and fat (and total sugars, if applicable) are to be expressed as g (gram) per 100 g or per 100 ml of the food. Energy and nutrients contained in the food must also be declared in each serving of a food and the serving size should be stated on the label.

The energy and nutrients mentioned above should be stated in a table, known commonly as a Nutrition Information Panel (NIP). A sample NIP, declaring only the mandatory or core nutrients, is given in Table 14.1.

Table 14.1. A sample NIP with only mandatory nutrients

Nutrition Information		
Serving size : 200 ml		
Servings per package :5		
	Per 100 ml	Per Serving (200 ml)
Energy (kcal)	100	200
(kJ)	420	840
Carbohydrate (g)	23.8	47.6
Total sugars* (g)	11.5	23.0
Protein (g)	1.1	2.2
Fat (g)	0	0

* Total sugars refer to all monosaccharides and disaccharides contained in the beverage

Source : Ministry of Health Malaysia (2007)

2.4 Optional nutrients that may be declared

Besides the core nutrients that must be declared on a label, other nutrients that are present in the product may also be declared. Vitamins and minerals in the food may be declared in the NIP if they are present in significant amounts. Other nutrients that may also be declared are dietary fibre, cholesterol and sodium. There are no conditions for minimum amounts that must be present. The format for declaration of these optional nutrients is the same as that for the mandatory nutrients, i.e. in per 100 g or per 100 ml and per serving.

A sample NIP for the declaration of optional nutrients is given in Table 14.2.

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Table 14.2. A sample NIP with optional nutrients

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Serving size: 200 ml		
Servings per package: 5		
	Per 100 ml	Per Serving (200 ml)
Fat (g)	5.8	11.6
Monounsaturated fatty acids (g)	2.1	4.2
Polyunsaturated fatty acids (g)	1.0	2.0
Saturated fatty acids (g)	2.4	4.8
Trans fatty acids (g)	0.3	0.6
Cholesterol (mg)	49	98
Dietary fibre (g)	1.8	3.6
Vitamin A (µg)	80	160
Vitamin D (µg)	1.2	2.4
Vitamin E (mg)	0.3	0.6
Vitamin C (mg)	3.0	6.0
Thiamin (mg)	0.1	0.2
Riboflavin (mg)	0.6	1.2
Niacin (mg)	1.0	2.0
Vitamin B ₆ (mg)	0.1	0.2
Folic acids (µg)	22	44
Vitamin B ₁₂ (µg)	0.4	0.8
Calcium (mg)	270	540
Sodium (mg)	20	40
Magnesium (mg)	19	38
Iron (mg)	1.5	3.0
Zinc (mg)	2.3	4.6
Iodine (µg)	5	10

Source : Ministry of Health Malaysia (2007)

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2.5 Use nutrition label wisely

Nutrition labels can be a useful source for nutrition information. It provides information on the amount of energy and other nutrients in the product that a consumer is contemplating to purchase. The consumer can then consider how this food contributes to the total nutrient intake of the day. A guide to the use of Nutrition Information Panel is given in Appendix 2, explaining the different components of the Panel.

Nutrition labels will also enable a consumer to compare the nutrient composition of the different brands available for the same food item (Appendix 3). He should be guided by the content of all the nutrients provided on the label, not merely the level of one nutrient, for example fat. Nutrition labels can stimulate the consumer to be more nutrition conscious. He should think of “nutrition”, not just when he is purchasing processed foods, but also when he is making choices for fresh food, cooked meals, as well as when preparing his daily meals (Tee, 2006a).

Older children who tag along shopping in supermarkets could be educated on nutrition labelling. Show them the nutrition information on the label and the significance of the nutrients and the values declared. Children must be familiar with nutrition even in their early years and let nutrition principles guide them to a healthier future (Tee, 2006a).

It should be borne in mind that nutrition labelling is only one of the educational tools in guiding food choices. Use this, in addition to other reliable sources of nutrition information to strengthen nutrition knowledge about food and nutrition and their role in health and disease.

2.6 Permitted nutrition claims

Nutrition claims are permitted on food labels, with the introduction of a nutrition claims regulations by the Ministry of Health in 2003 (MOH, 1985). Three types of nutrition claims are permitted and these are similar to those in the guidelines of the Codex Alimentarius, a set of international standards and guidelines established by a Joint Food Programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Health Organization (WHO) (Hawkes, 2004; WHO/FAO, 2007b).

The nutrition claims permitted in Malaysia are:

- Nutrient content claim
- Nutrient comparative claim
- Nutrient function claim

As the name suggest, nutrient content claims describe the level of a nutrient in a food product. A permitted nutrient content claim on the label of a beverage is, for example, “source of vitamin C” or “high in calcium”. Similarly, such claims can be made for protein and ten vitamins as well as five minerals. These are the so-called “good nutrients”. In contrast to the above, another type of nutrient content claim is, for example, “low in cholesterol” or “fat free”. These claims are for the so-called “bad nutrients”, namely, energy, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, trans-fatty acids, sugars and sodium. There are, of course, no “bad nutrients”, with the exception of trans-fatty acids. All nutrients, including energy, fat and cholesterol are all required for normal body functions. It is really the excessive intakes of these nutrients that are undesirable. Indeed, excessive intakes of vitamins and minerals too, are undesirable.

A nutrient comparative claim is a claim that compares the nutrient levels and/or

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energy values of two or more foods. One such claim is “less fat”, or “reduced salt”. The opposing comparative claim is “extra vitamin A”, or “more protein”, and so on.

The third type of nutrition claim is the nutrient function claim, which describes the physiological role of the nutrient in growth, development and normal functions of the body. An example of such a claim is: calcium helps in the making of strong bones and teeth. Besides nutrients in the classical sense, there are permitted function claims for several food components. Examples are: plant sterol helps to lower blood cholesterol; oat soluble fibre (beta-glucan) helps to lower blood cholesterol.

The Ministry of Health Malaysia has published a list of permitted nutrient function claims (MOH, 2007) (Appendix 4). These claims include those for nutrients and have been supported by scientific data for a long time, e.g. for iron, vitamins A, B and C. Other claims on this list are those that are approved based on more recent scientific findings. These are mostly for non-nutrients, or the “other food components”. Only the claims on this list are permitted on food labels. If the food industry wishes to propose a new claim for a nutrient or other food component, an application has to be made to the Ministry of Health, supported by scientific data.

2.7 Disease-related health claims are not permitted

Claims linking the consumption of a food or food component to the reduced risk of developing a disease is not permitted. Hence, a claim that “nutrient A helps reduce risk to coronary heart disease” is not permitted.

Consumers should realise that chronic diseases have multiple causes and taking a particular nutrient or food component alone

will not reduce risk to coronary heart diseases, diabetes or cancers. In addition to taking that nutrient or food, one must practice overall healthy eating and adopt a healthy lifestyle. The consumer should not be misled by a health claim and consumes excessive amounts of this food and omit other items from his diet.

2.8 Conditions required for making nutrition claims

Before each of the nutrient content or comparative claims above can be made, a food product has to meet specific criteria. Firstly, only protein and a number of vitamins and minerals in a specific list are permitted in making these claims. Secondly, food manufacturers intending to make a “source of” or “high in” claim must ensure the food product contains a minimum amount of protein or the vitamin and mineral stipulated in the regulation. Similarly, the food intending to declare a “low in” or “free of” claim must not contain more than the levels specified in the regulations. The required conditions for making nutrient content claims are given in Appendix 5.

The law has also stipulated specific criteria that must be met before nutrient function claims are permitted on a label (Appendix 6). The food must contain a specified minimum amount of the nutrient that is the subject of the claim. A further condition that must be met is that if a food label has any of the nutrition claims mentioned above, it becomes compulsory for the amount of the four core nutrients (such as energy, protein, carbohydrate and fat) and the nutrient or food component that is being claimed to be declared on the label.

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2.9 Appropriate and effective use of nutrition claims

Nutrition claims provide further information to the consumer, in addition to the declaration of amounts of nutrients on the label. Nutrient content claims and comparative claims provide descriptions of what those amounts of nutrients are, for example, high or low. Such descriptors should be viewed in the right context and used appropriately (Tee, 2006b; WHO, 2004).

Amongst the same category or type of food, a consumer may use such claims to guide in the selection of a particular brand. For example, amongst several similar beverages, the consumer may give preference to the one with “high vitamin C” claim. Amongst various brands of curry chicken, he may prefer the one with “low sodium” claim.

A consumer, however, should not select a food merely based on one such claim. The beverage with the “high vitamin C” claim may have a high sugar content. Similarly, the chicken curry with the “low sodium” claim may have more fat compared to another brand. It does not mean that a food that does not have a “low in fat” claim is bad for the consumer. Similarly, it does not mean that a food with a “cholesterol free” claim is the best choice. It should be emphasised that the consumer must look for the overall nutritional profile of the food and not just rely on one or two claims on the label. Make use of the nutrition information panel together with the claims (Tee, 2006b).

Nutrient function claims are meant to provide factual information to the consumer regarding the physiological function of that particular nutrient or food component. These are meant to be nutrition information that a consumer can use, together with other nutrition information from various sources.

These claims should not imply that the nutrient cures, treats or protects a person from diseases (Tee, 2006b).

3. Current status

Since the gazetting of the nutrition labelling and claims regulations in 2003, several studies have been conducted to determine the extent consumers are reading nutrition labels and claims, their understanding and utilisation of these information. These are small scale studies, amongst various consumer groups in different parts of the country.

The largest data set available on use and understanding of nutrition labelling are findings from the Third National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS III) carried out in 2006 (IPH, 2008). This nationwide survey included a section on determining the practices of seeking information on nutrition labels among the community. The study did not include aspects related to nutrition and health claims.

The total number of respondents in this survey who responded to questions on nutrition labelling was 39,506. It was found that less than 15% of the responses actually read nutritional information such as energy (7.18%), fat (14.8%), carbohydrate (11.4%), vitamin (12.3%), salt (8.1%), mineral contents (6.5%), food additives (6.2%) and others (6.2%). Only 27 (<1%) respondents actually took note of all the six elements of nutritional labelling (total energy, carbohydrate content and sugar, fat, salt/sodium, vitamin, mineral). actually took note of all the six elements of nutritional labelling (total energy, carbohydrate content and sugar, fat, salt/sodium, vitamin, mineral).

Majority of the respondents (66.7%)

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had secondary education, 22.2% had tertiary education followed by 11.1% of them with primary education. Most of them (81.5%) were from urban areas and only 18.5% of them were from rural areas. The percentage of respondents who stated that they always understand nutrition label was 60.6%, sometimes understand 33.9% followed by never understand 5.5%.

The NHMS III report pointed out that only a very small proportion of the respondents read the nutrition label although a fairly high percentage (60%) always understood the information on the label. The report highlighted the need for more health promotion efforts to encourage consumers to read nutritional information on food labels.

4. Key recommendations

Key recommendation 1

Use Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) to guide in making food choices.

How to achieve

1. Obtain information on the amount of energy and nutrients in the product that is being considered to be purchased.
2. Consider how the energy and nutrients contained in this food contribute to the total nutrient intake of the day.
3. Compare the content of all the nutrients on the label of the different brands available for the same food item, not merely the level of one nutrient.

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Key recommendation 2

Make use of nutrition claims wisely.

How to achieve

1. Use nutrient content claims and comparative claims appropriately.
2. Use these claims together with the NIP in guiding food choices.
3. Make use of nutrient function claims together with other nutrition information from various sources in making food choices.
4. Note that nutrient function claims do not imply that the nutrient cures, treats or protects a person from diseases.

Key recommendation 3

Educate children on the use of NIP.

How to achieve

1. Educate children who tag along when shopping in supermarkets.
2. Show them the nutrition information on the label and the significance of the nutrients and the values declared.
3. Familiarise children with nutrition information even in their early years and let nutrition principles guide them in making healthier food choices throughout life.



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Appendices

Appendix 1. Foods requiring mandatory nutrition labelling

Regulation No	Food category	Types of food (as extracted from Food Regulations 1985)
64 - 75	Prepared cereal food and bread	Prepared cereal food (including breakfast cereals), bread (white bread, fruit bread, meal bread, rye bread, wheat-germ bread, wholemeal bread, enriched bread).
84 - 87, 89 - 99 & 113	Milk product	Skimmed milk or skim milk or non-fat milk or separated milk, milk, pasteurised milk, sterilised milk, ultra high temperature milk or U.H.T milk, flavoured milk, full cream milk powder or dried full cream milk, skimmed milk powder or skim milk powder or dried non-fat milk solids or separated milk powder, malted milk powder recombined milk, reconstituted milk, evaporated milk or unsweetened condensed milk, condensed milk, sweetened condensed milk, lactose hydrolysed milk, filled milk, filled milk powder, evaporated filled milk/ unsweetened condensed filled milk, condensed filled milk/sweetened condensed filled milk, cultured milk/fermented milk.
135	Flour confection	Any pastry, cake, biscuit/other product prepared from mixture of flour/meal and other food.
149, 151, 161 & 220	Canned meat, fish and vegetable	Canned meat, canned meat with other food, canned fish, canned vegetable.
233 - 242	Canned fruit and various fruit juices	Canned fruit, canned fruit cocktail, fruit juice (apple juice, grapefruits juice, lemon juice, lime juice, orange juice, passion fruit juice, pineapple juice).
344 - 345	Salad dressing and mayonnaise	Salad dressing (including tartar sauce), mayonnaise.
348 - 358	Soft drink	Syrup, fruit syrup/fruit cordial/fruit squash, flavoured syrup/ flavoured cordial, fruit juice drink, fruit drink, flavoured drink, soft drink base/soft drink premix, botanical beverage mix, soya bean milk, soya bean drink.
26 (7)	Foods that have been fortified, enriched, vitaminised, supplemented or strengthened with specific vitamins or minerals.	
18B (14)	Foods that make any nutrition claim on a label of a food product pertaining to its nutritional quality.	

Source: Ministry of Health Malaysia (2007)

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Appendix 2 . Guide to use of Nutrition Information Panel (NIP)

The NIP lists the amount of energy and several nutrients contained in the food. Example below explains the different components of the NIP.

Nutrition Information		
Serving size : 5 Pieces (20 g) ◆ Servings per package : 5		
Nutrients	Per 100 g	Per serving 20 g
Energy (kcal)	525	105
Carbohydrate (g)	56.2	11.2
Protein (g)	8.0	1.8
Fat (g)	29.8	6.0

Nutrient Listing

It is compulsory for many pre-packaged foods to list the energy, carbohydrate, protein and fat content.

The amount of vitamins and minerals may also be listed.

The Amount of Nutrients

This column refers to nutrients contained in every 100 g (if solid) or every 100 ml (if liquid) of a food or drink.

In the example given, every 100 g of the food provides 525 kcal of energy, 56.2 g of carbohydrate, 8.0 g of protein and 29.8 g of fat.

Amounts of Nutrients per Serving

This is the amount of nutrients and energy you receive in each serving of the food.

In the example given, each serving of 20 g gives you 105 kcal of energy.

If you consume 2 servings of the food, the energy and nutrients consumed will be doubled.

Source: Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) (2009)

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Appendix 3. Comparing nutrient content of different brands

The NIP on food label enables the comparison of the nutritional content among different brands of similar food and find out which ones are higher or lower in certain nutrients, thereby guiding choice of food. Example below compares two brands of a similar food product.

NUTRITION INFORMATION (BRAND A)			NUTRITION INFORMATION (BRAND B)		
Serving size : (200ml) • Servings per package : 5			Serving size : (250 ml) • Servings per package : 4		
Nutrients	Per 100 ml	Per serving (200 ml)	Nutrients	Per 100 ml	Per serving (200 ml)
Energy (kcal)	125	250	Energy (kcal)	82	205
Carbohydrate (g)	12	24	Carbohydrate (g)	11	27.5
Sugars (g)	0	0	Sugars (g)	2	5.0
Protien (g)	8.0	16	Protien (g)	5.0	12.5
Fat (g)	5.0	10	Fat (g)	2.0	5.0

Note:

- Always compare the nutritional content of different brands of a similar product based on per 100 g or 100 ml. Serving sizes cannot be used because they may differ from one brand to another (as in the example above).
- Do not make your decision to purchase a particular brand based on one nutrient alone, but consider the other nutrients listed on the NIP as well.

Source : Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM) (2008)

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Appendix 4. Permitted nutrient function claims

❖	<p><i>Bifidobacterium lactis</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Bifidobacterium lactis</i> helps improve a beneficial intestinal microflora* ii. <i>Bifidobacterium lactis</i> may help to reduce the incidence of diarrhoea*
❖	<p>Calcium aids in the development of strong bones and teeth</p>
❖	<p>Folic acid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Folic acid is essential for growth and division of cells ii. Folate plays a role in the formation of red blood cells iii. Folate helps to maintain the growth and development of the foetus
❖	<p>High Amylose Maize Resistant Starch (HAMRS) helps improve/promote colonic/bowel/intestinal function/environment*</p>
❖	<p>Iron :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Iron is a factor in red blood cell formation ii. Iron is a component of haemoglobin in red blood cell which carry oxygen to all parts of the body
❖	<p>Inulin and oligofructose (fructo-oligosaccharide) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Inulin helps increase intestinal bifidobacteria and helps maintain a good intestinal environment* ii. Oligofructose (fructo-oligosaccharide) helps increase intestinal bifidobacteria and helps maintain a good intestinal environment* iii. Inulin is bifidogenic* iv. Oligofructose (fructo-oligosaccharide) is bifidogenic* v. Inulin is prebiotic* vi. Oligofructose (fructo-oligosaccharide) is prebiotic*
❖	<p>Iodine is essential for the formation of thyroid hormone</p>
❖	<p>Magnesium promotes calcium absorption and retention</p>
❖	<p>Niacin is needed for the release of energy from protein, fats and carbohydrates</p>
❖	<p>Oat soluble fibre (beta-glucan) :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Oat soluble fibre (beta-glucan) helps lower or reduce cholesterol* ii. Oat soluble fibre (beta-glucan) helps to lower the rise of blood glucose provided it is not consumed together with other food*
❖	<p>Oligosaccharide mixture containing 90% (wt/wt) GOS and 10% (wt/wt) lcfOS :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Oligosaccharide mixture containing 90% (wt/wt) GOS and 10% (wt/wt) lcfOS is prebiotic* ii. Oligosaccharide mixture containing 90% (wt/wt) GOS and 10% (wt/wt) lcfOS is bifidogenic* iii. Oligosaccharide mixture containing 90% (wt/wt) GOS and 10% (wt/wt) lcfOS helps increase intestinal bifidobacteria and helps maintain a good intestinal environment* iv. Oligosaccharide mixture containing 90% (wt/wt) GOS and 10% (wt/wt) lcfOS helps to improve the gut/intestinal immune systems of babies/infants*

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❖	Patented cooking oil blend helps to increase HDL, cholesterol and improve HDL/LDL cholesterol
❖	Plant sterol or plant stanol helps lower or reduce cholesterol*
❖	Polydextrose : i. Polydextrose is bifidogenic ii. Polydextrose helps increase intestinal bifidobacteria and helps maintain a good intestinal microflora*
❖	Protein : i. Protein helps build and repair body tissues ii. Protein is essential for growth and development iii. Protein provides amino acids necessary for protein synthesis
❖	Sialic acid is an important component of the brain tissue*
❖	Soya protein helps to reduce cholesterol*
❖	Vitamin A : i. Vitamin A aids in maintaining the health of the skin and mucousmembrane ii. Vitamin A is essential for the functioning of the eye
❖	Vitamin B₁ / Thiamine is needed for the release of energy from carbohydrate
❖	Vitamin B₂ / Riboflavin is needed for the release of energy from protien, fat and carbohydrates
❖	Vitamin B₁₂ / Cyanocobalamin is needed for red blood cell production
❖	Vitamin C : 1. Vitamin C enhances absorption of iron from non-meat sources ii. Vitamin C contributes to the absorption of iron from food
❖	Vitamin D : i. Vitamin D helps the body utilise calcium and phosphorus ii. Vitamin D is necessary for the absorption and utilisation of calcium and phosphorus
❖	Vitamin E Protects the fats in body tissue from oxidation
❖	Zinc is essential for growth

Note:

- For all the above claims, words/sentences of similar meaning can also be used.
- These function claims include those for nutrients as well as for other components.
- The above function claims will be reviewed from time to time based on new relevant scientific evidence as well as applications from the food industry. Updated list of permitted claims may be available on the website of the Food Safety and Quality Division of the Ministry of Health Malaysia, <http://fsq.moh.gov.my/>
- A nutrient function claim can only be made provided the food meets the criterion for claims for “source of” (Appendix 5). For items marked (*), conditions set out in Appendix 6 must be met.

GOS= Galacto-oligosaccharide

lcFOS=long chain fructo-oligosaccharide

Source: Ministry of Health Malaysia (2007)

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Appendix 5. Conditions for nutrient content claims

Component	Claim	Not more than
Energy	Low	40 kcal (170 kJ) per 100 g (solids) or 20 kcal (80 kJ) per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	4 kcal per 100 g (or 100 ml)
Fat	Low	3 g per 100 g (solids) or 1.5 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	0.15 g per 100 g (or 100 ml)
Saturated Fat	Low	1.5 g per 100 g (solids) or 0.75 g per 100 ml (liquids) and 10% of total energy of the food
	Free	0.1 g per 100 g (or 100 ml)
Cholesterol	Low	0.02 g per 100 g (solids) or 0.01 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	0.005 g per 100 g (or 100 ml)
Trans Fatty Acids	Low	1.5 g per 100 g (solids) or 0.75 g per 100 ml (liquids) and 10% of total energy of the food
	Free	0.1 g per 100 g (or 100 ml)
Sugar*	Low	5 g per 100 g (solids) or 2.5 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	0.5 g per 100 g (solids) or 0.5 g per 100 ml
Sodium	Low	0.12 g per 100 g (solids) or 0.06 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	Very Low	0.04 g per 100 g (solids) or 0.02 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	Free	0.005 g per 100 g (solids) or 0.005 g per 100 ml (liquids)
Component	Claim	Not less than
Protein	Source	10 % of NRV per 100 g (solids) or 5 % of NRV per 100 ml (liquids) or 5 % of NRV per 100 kcal
	High	(at least 2 times the value for “source of”)
Vitamins and Minerals	Source	15 % of NRV per 100 g (solids) or 7.5 % of NRV per 100 ml (liquids) or 5 % of NRV per 100 kcal
	High	(at least 2 times the value for “source of”)
Total dietary fibre	Source	3 g per 100 g (solids) or 1.5 g per 100 ml (liquids)
	High	6 g per 100 g (solids) or 3 g per 100 ml (liquids)

NRV = Nutrient Reference Value

Source: Ministry of Health Malaysia (2007)

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Appendix 6. Conditions for content of other food component for use in nutrition claims

Component	Minimum amount	Other conditions
<i>Bifidobacterium lactis</i>	1 x 10 ⁶ minimum viable cells per g	Claim only permitted in infant formula, follow-up formula, formulated milk powder for children and cereal based food for infant and children.
High Amylose Maize Resistance Starch (HAMRS)	2.5 g per serving	-
Inulin and oligofructose/ fructo-oligosaccharide (FOS)	Inulin: 2 g per serving FOS: 1.25 g per serving	This minimum level is for other food except infant formula.
Inulin and oligofructose/ fructo-oligosaccharide (FOS)	0.4 g / 100 ml on a ready to drink basis	This minimum level is specified for infant formula only.
Oat soluble fibre (β-glucan) <i>* in relation to cholesterol claim (see Appendix 4)</i>	2 g per 100 g (solids)	Must also contains total dietary fibre not less than amount required to claim as “source”: 3 g per 100 g (solids) 1.5 g per 100 ml (liquids)
Oat soluble fibre (β-glucan) <i>* in relation to blood glucose claim (see Appendix 4)</i>		i. Addition and claim for oat soluble fibre (β-glucan) only permitted in cereal and cereal based product. ii. Claim only permitted for product where the macronutrient profile (carbohydrate, protein and fat) complies with Recommended Nutrient Intake (RNI) Malaysia. iii. There shall be written on the label of food making such claim statement “For advice regarding consuming this product, consult your medical professional”.

Key Message 14

Component	Minimum amount required	Other conditions
<p>Oligosaccharide mixture containing 90% (wt/wt) galacto-oligosaccharide (GOS) and 10% (wt/wt) long chain fructo-oligosaccharides (lcFOS)</p> <p><i>* in relation to intestinal immune claim (see Appendix 4)</i></p>	<p>0.8 g per 100 ml</p>	<p>Claim only permitted in infant formula and formula up formula.</p>
<p>Oligosaccharide mixture containing 90% (wt/wt) galacto-oligosaccharide (GOS) and 10% (wt/wt) long chain fructo-oligosaccharides (lcFOS)</p> <p><i>* in relation to prebiotic/bifidogenic and increase intestinal bifidobacteria (see Appendix 4)</i></p>	<p>0.4 g per 100 ml</p>	<p>Claim only permitted in infant formula, follow up formula and formulated milk powder for children.</p>
<p>Patented cooking oil blend</p>	<p>Ratio of fatty acid profiles for SFA:MUFA:PUFA must be 1:1:1</p>	<p>The patented cooking oil blend refer to US Patent Number 5578334 & 5843497.</p>

Key Message 14

Component	Minimum amount required	Other conditions
Plant sterol / Plant stanol	1.3 g per 100 g (solids) 160 mg per 100 ml (liquids)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Addition and claim for plant sterol/plant stanol only permitted in milk, milk product, soya bean milk and soya bean drink (Reg. 82, 83, 357 & 358 respectively). ii. Types of plant sterol or plant stanol permitted: “plant sterol/plant stanol, phytosterols/phytostanol, sitosterol, campesterol, stigmasterol or other related plant stanol”. iii. Maximum amount in daily serving for product added with plant sterol/plant stanol is not more than 3 g plant sterol/plant stanol per day. iv. Declaration of the total amount of plant sterol/plant stanol contained in the products shall be expressed in metric units per 100 g or per 100 ml or per package if the package contains only a single portion and per serving as quantified on the label. v. Only the terms “plant sterols” or “plant stanols” shall be used in declaring the presence of such components. vi. There shall be written on the label of food making such claim a statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. “Not recommended for pregnant and lactating women and children under the age of five years”. b. “Persons on cholesterol-lowering medication shall seek medical advice before consuming this product”. c. That the product is consumed as part of a balanced and varied diet and shall include regular consumption of fruits and vegetables to help maintain the carotenoid level. d. “With added plant sterols” or “With added plant stanols” in not less than 10 point lettering.

Key Message 14

Component	Minimum amount required	Other conditions
Polydextrose	1.25 g per serving	Addition and claim for polydextrose are not permitted in infant formula.
Sialic acid	Not less than : 36 mg per 100 kcal (24 mg per 100 ml)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The component (sialic acid) shall not exceed 67 mg per 100 kcal (45 mg per 100 ml). ii. Addition and claim only permitted in infant formula and follow up formula. iii. Only natural sialic acid from milk can be added.
Soya protein	5 g per serving	To include the statement: “Amount recommended to give the lowering effect on the blood cholesterol is 25 g per day”.

Note:

As additional claims are permitted, this list will be updated accordingly. See note in Appendix 4

Source: Ministry of Health Malaysia (2007)