



FOOD LABELS 1-2-3 (PITTSBURGH PIRATES SPORTS NUTRITION & FUELING)

Sometimes food labels can include blurry definitions that might result in misled consumers and wasted money. This guide can help you eat healthier, all while making your grocery budget go even further.

The terms below aren't new, but they're becoming more pervasive on labels. Knowing the basics of food labels helps determine what you think is worth spending your money on.

ALL-NATURAL

FDA regulation = none

Many product labels use this term to make you think it is a healthier version of whatever you are buying. While there is no harm in purchasing foods labeled as all-natural, be aware that any company can print this on their label without any regulations of what's in the actual product.

For meat & poultry, however, the USDA allows the use of "natural" on the label of products that contain no artificial ingredients or added colors.

WHOLE GRAIN

FDA regulation = vague



"Made with whole grain" on packaging means the product could contain only 1% whole grain, while the majority of the grains are refined. The same goes for "multi-grain" as it simply indicates that there is more than one type of grain in the bread.

Look for products labeled 100% whole grain. The Whole Grains Council makes it easy to find with their 100% Whole Grain Stamp.

GLUTEN FREE

This diet was created for people who have celiac disease or nonceliac gluten sensitivity. It caught on as a trend to lose weight and it continues to gain momentum. In order to bear a "gluten free" claim, products must have an undetectable level of gluten. But just because something is gluten free does not mean it's healthier for you! If you don't need to limit gluten in your diet, you might actually be missing out on some key nutrients such as fiber, B vitamins, folate and protein.

NO ADDED HORMONES

Have you ever spent an extra dollar or two on pork or poultry because of the label claim "no added hormones"? The reality is that USDA does not permit the use of added hormones in poultry. While federal regulations previously did not permit the use of added hormones in pork, recent agricultural guidance has shown that some pigs do receive FDA-approved hormones for various reasons. Upon this development, USDA has now begun to require stringent documentation for pork making a "no added hormones" claim.



NON-GMO (genetically modified organisms)



While no nutritional difference exists between non-GMO products and their conventional counterparts, those interested in avoiding GMOs can look for non-GMO claims, such as the icon “Non-GMO Project Verified”, on product labels. The Non-GMO Project verifies that the process products go through, from seed to shelf, are produced according to their best practices for GMO avoidance.

Keep in mind that some products labeled as Non-GMO do not have a genetically modified counterpart. For example, genetically modified wheat is not approved for commercial production or sale in the US – so there is truly no difference between wheat products with or without a Non-GMO claim.

Starting in 2022, most products that are produced with genetically modified ingredients will need to indicate such on the label. Most of these products will be labeled with the disclaimer “Contains a bioengineered food ingredient.”

ORGANIC



USDA regulation (animals and animal products) = organic defined as meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy that come from animals that are not given antibiotics or growth hormones, receive feed that is 100% organic, and have access to the outdoors year-round

THREE LEVELS OF ORGANIC CLAIMS ARE:

100-PERCENT ORGANIC

Products that are completely organic or made of only organic ingredients qualify and earn a USDA Organic seal.

ORGANIC

Products with at least 95 percent organic ingredients qualify and earn a USDA Organic seal.

MADE WITH ORGANIC INGREDIENTS

Products in which at least 70 percent of ingredients are certified organic. The USDA organic seal cannot be used but “made with organic ingredients” may appear on packaging.

