

Front-of-Pack 'Nutri-Level' Labeling for Metabolic Disease Prevention

Simple front-of-pack grades can help people spot hidden free sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats—and support prevention of type 2 diabetes and high blood pressure. [1][2][4]

What if one small label could make healthier choices easier in seconds?

A clearer view today can make the healthier choice easier for you, your family, and your community.



Key Highlights

- ✓ Front-of-pack labels simplify complex nutrition information into quick, easy-to-read guidance. [2][8]
- ✓ They help shoppers compare packaged foods and drinks at a glance. [2][8]
- ✓ They support lower intake of excess free sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats. [1][3][4]
- ✓ They work best as part of an overall healthy eating pattern. [1]

Awareness Points

- ✓ A product that looks healthy can still be high in sugar or sodium. [2][8]
- ✓ A better grade does not mean unlimited portions. [1]
- ✓ Labels guide decisions, but they do not replace the full ingredient list or medical advice. [2][8]

Reality / Objective Update

Unhealthy diets are a major driver of noncommunicable diseases. According to WHO, around 830 million people live with diabetes, and hypertension is highly prevalent globally. WHO and PAHO describe front-of-pack labeling as a practical public-health tool to help people notice products higher in nutrients of concern and compare options more easily. [1][2][4]



Healthier choices today for stronger tomorrows.

Why this matters

Many packaged foods and drinks contain added sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats that are not always obvious from the front of the pack. Consuming these nutrients regularly and in larger amounts can increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and other health problems over time. [1][2][4]

A simple front-of-pack 'Nutri-Level' grade can support faster comparison and more informed choices when shopping for everyday foods and drinks. While labels are not a complete solution on their own, they are a valuable tool when combined with regular health checks and other healthy habits, and can help create a healthier food environment for individuals, families, and communities. [2][4]

The Big Picture: What the Label Means

A front-of-pack 'Nutri-Level' label is a simplified guide placed on the front of packaged foods and drinks. It helps people quickly judge whether a product is lower or higher in nutrients of concern—especially free sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats—without decoding the full nutrition panel first. [1][2][8]

What is it helping prevent?

Healthier choices today for a brighter tomorrow.

Type 2 diabetes



Type 2 diabetes is a chronic condition in which the body becomes resistant to insulin or does not use it effectively, causing blood sugar levels to rise. [6]

Primary hypertension



Primary hypertension is persistently high blood pressure that develops over time, often without one single identifiable cause. [7]



Short Reality / Objective Update



These conditions often develop gradually and are strongly influenced by daily habits, especially diet. [1][6][7]



Packaged foods and sweetened beverages can contribute to excess sugar, sodium, and unhealthy fat intake. [1][3][4][5]

The Signs: What it may feel like

Common signs of type 2 diabetes



Increased thirst



Frequent urination



Unusual fatigue



Blurred vision



Slower wound healing



Numbness or tingling in hands or feet

These signs can be subtle. If you notice them regularly, speak with a healthcare professional.

[6]

Hypertension: often silent



Often no symptoms



Severe elevation may cause headache



Chest pain



Shortness of breath



Dizziness



Vision changes

Many people with high blood pressure feel well, even when it is high.



Severe symptoms need urgent medical attention.

[7]



Awareness Point

High blood pressure is often called a silent condition because many people feel well until complications develop. [7]

From Everyday Choices to Long-Term Health



Packaged foods and drinks

Often higher in sugar, sodium and unhealthy fats. [1][3][4][5]



Excess sugar, sodium and unhealthy fats

Can contribute to weight gain, higher blood pressure, higher blood sugar, and unhealthy cholesterol levels. [1][4][5][6][7]



Higher long-term metabolic risk

Increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and other health problems. [1][6][7]

Small changes today can make a big difference tomorrow.

Why This Happens: Hidden Nutrients and Everyday Risk

Front-of-pack labels matter because many foods that look convenient or appealing can quietly contain high amounts of free sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats. These hidden nutrients can add up over time and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and other health problems. [1][2][8]

The Root Causes (Why)

Everyday foods can contain more than we expect.

Small amounts add up over time.

Free sugars



Think of free sugars as a fast fuel source. Small amounts can fit in the diet, but too much too often can promote weight gain, blood sugar strain, and a higher risk of type 2 diabetes over time. [3][6]

Sodium



Sodium acts like extra pressure in a household plumbing system—when there is too much, the pressure inside the pipes goes up. In the body, too much sodium can contribute to higher blood pressure. [4][7]

Trans fats and unhealthy fats



Industrial trans fats can worsen blood cholesterol and increase cardiovascular risk. Reducing them is part of protecting long-term heart and metabolic health. [5]

Nutrient to watch	Why it matters	Helpful official benchmark
Free sugars	Too much can contribute to unhealthy weight gain and metabolic risk.	WHO recommends reducing free sugars to less than 10% of total energy intake; below 5% brings additional benefits. [3]
Sodium	High intake raises blood pressure risk.	WHO recommends less than 2 g sodium per day, equivalent to less than 5 g salt. [4]
Trans fat	Increases cardiovascular risk and should be minimized.	WHO recommends less than 1% of total energy intake and elimination of industrial trans fats. [5]

How ‘Nutri-Level’ helps

A simple front-of-pack label helps you compare products in the same category more quickly, so healthier options are easier to spot. [2][8]



3 practical steps for everyday choices

- 1 Compare similar products.**
Look at the labels of products in the same category (e.g., yogurts with yogurts, cereals with cereals). [2]
- 2 Prefer better grades more often.**
Choose products with A or B grades whenever possible. [2][8]
- 3 Still check serving size and ingredients.**
Also look at the serving size and ingredient list for the full picture. [10]

Awareness Point

A healthy-looking snack or drink can still be high in sugar or sodium, so quick visual labels can be useful. [2][8]

Red Flags and Real-Life Use

The front-of-pack ‘Nutri-Level’ label is most useful when people know what deserves extra caution and how to apply the information during everyday shopping. [2][8]

Red Flags: When to slow down and look closer

- ✓ Products with a poorer Nutri-Level grade or clear warnings for sugar, sodium, or unhealthy fats deserve closer attention. [2][8]
- ✓ Sweetened drinks, salty snacks, instant meals, desserts, and highly processed packaged foods often need a second look. [1][4][5]
- ✓ People living with diabetes, high blood pressure, kidney disease, obesity, or strong family risk should be especially mindful of label cues and discuss diet choices with a health professional. [6][7]



At-a-glance shopping example

Same aisle.
Different choices.
A healthier you.

Product (example)		Nutri-Level	Sugar	Sodium	What it means
	Bottled iced tea	NUTRI-LEVEL D	 High (more sugar)	 Low (less sodium)	Better as an occasional choice.
	Plain yogurt drink	NUTRI-LEVEL B	 Low / Moderate	 Low (less sodium)	Generally a better frequent choice.
	Instant noodle cup	NUTRI-LEVEL E	 Low (less sugar)	 High (more sodium)	Compare carefully and limit frequency.

How to use the label in 4 practical steps

-  Compare similar products, not completely different foods. [2]
-  Choose the better grade more often, especially for foods you buy regularly. [2][8]
-  Still check portion size, ingredients, and how often you eat it. [1][10]
-  Build most meals around minimally processed foods, then use labels to make smarter packaged-food choices. [1]

Myth vs. Reality



Myth: “One label tells me everything about a food.”



Reality: It is a quick guide, not a full health guarantee. The full nutrition facts, ingredients, and your overall eating pattern still matter. [1][10]



Awareness Point

A useful label supports better choices, but long-term prevention still depends on overall diet, movement, sleep, and medical follow-up when needed. [1][6][7]

The Plan: Prevention in Practice

Front-of-pack labels are a practical public-health tool, but they work best when combined with regular health checks and everyday habits that support long-term metabolic health. [1][2][6][7]



Doctor-led medical care

- ✓ Blood pressure checks and follow-up for people at risk or already diagnosed. [7]
- ✓ Blood glucose or HbA1c testing when clinically appropriate. [6]
- ✓ Individual counselling on diet, weight, and cardiovascular risk. [1][6][7]
- ✓ Medicines when prescribed and ongoing follow-up for control and complications. [6][7]



Daily actions you can control

- ✓ Choose better Nutri-Level grades more often when buying packaged foods. [2][8]
- ✓ Cut back on sugary drinks and limit foods high in sodium and unhealthy fats. [1][3][4][5]
- ✓ Build meals around vegetables, fruit, legumes, whole grains, and other minimally processed foods. [1]
- ✓ Stay physically active and maintain a healthy body weight. [1][6][7]
- ✓ Do not smoke, and follow professional advice about alcohol and sleep. [1][7]
- ✓ If you already live with diabetes or hypertension, follow your treatment plan and attend routine check-ups. [6][7]

One useful tool—part of a bigger prevention picture

Small steps.
A healthier tomorrow.



Key Takeaways

- ✓ Better food information can support better food choices.
- ✓ Hidden sugars, sodium, and trans fats matter because they influence long-term risk.
- ✓ A front-of-pack label helps you act faster, but it is not the whole story.
- ✓ Prevention works best when public-health tools and personal habits work together.



References

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