

An Online Randomized Controlled Trial Comparing Front-of-package Nutrient Labels on Consumer Understanding, Perceptions, and Behavior

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BACKGROUND

- Packaged foods are the source of most added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat ("nutrients of concern")
- Overconsumption of nutrients of concern increases chronic disease risk
- Front-of-package labels (FOPLs) are a promising intervention to inform consumers and promote public health
- Unlike many other countries, the US does not have a mandatory FOPL
- In January 2025, FDA published a proposed rule for a mandatory FOPL
- There is a need to test FDA's label (Nutrition Info %DV) against other FOPL schemes (e.g., High In)

METHODS

- Large online RCT with 5 conditions: No-label control and 4 FOPL schemes (center panel)
- Participants viewed real products labeled according to assigned scheme
- Outcomes: Consumer understanding of nutrient profiles and content, perceived healthfulness of unhealthy products, and food selections in a shopping task

A **Multi High In** front-of-package label resulted in a **high level of consumer understanding**, helped consumers make **quick assessments**, and **healthier food selections**.

**Multi High In**



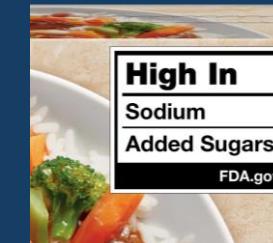
**Nutrition Info %DV  
(FDA's label)**



**Nutrition Info Red**



**High In**



**No-Label Control**



**RESULTS**

- N=13,929 adults approximating US distributions of sex, education, race and ethnicity, and age
- All FOPL schemes substantially improved consumer understanding and behavior compared to control
- Nutrition Info Red** and **Multi High In** outperformed **Nutrition Info %DV** in consumer understanding outcomes
- Nutrition Info Red** tended to have higher perceived healthfulness of unhealthy products relative to control and other schemes
- Multi High In** significantly reduced the risk of participants selecting a high-in food for themselves in a shopping task
- Multi High In** produced the fastest response times, while **Nutrition Info %DV** resulted in the slowest

**TAKEAWAY**

The FDA's label tended to underperform and, based on these results, a **Multi High In** scheme, which is already implemented in many Latin American countries, should be considered in the design of a mandatory FOPL.

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