

Consumer Trends: Consumer Interest in Nutrition Facts Waning

CHICAGO (PRWEB) — Nearly twenty years after the Nutrition Facts labels were put on the back of nearly every food and beverage in stores, interest in reading the label has steadily waned among U.S. households, according to The NPD Group, a leading global information company. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is proposing updates for the Nutrition Facts label to make it more relevant to today's consumers, but according to NPD's ongoing food and beverage market research, consumers read the labels when they first appeared but as time went on many stopped checking the label for what's in their food.

Through its National Eating Trends® service, which on a daily basis for over thirty years has monitored the eating and drinking habits of U.S. consumers, NPD asks consumers their level of agreement with the statement, "I frequently check labels to determine whether the foods I buy contain anything I'm trying to avoid." In 1990, after the Nutritional Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) was passed, 65 percent of consumers completely or mostly agreed with the statement, that percentage decreased to 60 percent in 1994 shortly before the Nutrition Facts labels began appearing on food packaging, and rose to 64 percent in 1995 after the labels were on food packaging. Since 1995, the percentages of consumers in agreement have ranged from a high of 61 percent to a low of 48 percent in 2013.

"The most likely reason for this decline is that the effort succeeded in educating Americans about what's in their food," says Harry Balzer, NPD chief industry analyst and author of *Eating Patterns in America*. "After all, how many times do you need to look at the Nutrition Facts label on your favorite cereal, or your favorite juice, and any other food you routinely consume?"

NPD also tracks what consumers usually look for when they do read the Nutrition Facts label. According to NPD's *Dieting Monitor*, which examines top-of-mind dieting and nutrition-related issues facing consumers, the top five items consumers who read the label look for are, in consecutive order, calories, sugar, sodium, fat, and carbohydrates.

"It's a safe bet that Americans now want more information, but be careful, there are always new issues that come up every few years," says Balzer. "If the Nutrition Facts label is to continue to educate, it should allow for changes more often than once every 20 years. For example, gluten, probiotics, and omega-3 were not on the radar screen 20 years ago."

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