



False Health Claims 101: FoodFight's Tips for Navigating Misleading Food Labels

Health claims on food packages are known as functional food claims. Many of these claims are based on little or no scientific evidence. Know the lingo so you don't get fooled into believing something is healthier than it actually is.

- **“Lightly sweetened”** does not mean low in sugar. The Food and Drug Administration has regulations concerning the use of “sugar free” and “no added sugars” but nothing governing the claims “low sugar” or “lightly sweetened.”
- **“Cholesterol free”** does not mean the food is totally fat free. It can still contain up to 2 grams of saturated fat.
- **“A good source of fiber”** often includes nontraditional sources of fiber called “isolated fibers” made from chicory root or purified powders of polydextrose and other substances that haven't been shown to lower blood sugar or cholesterol.
- **“Strengthens your immune system”** does not always mean a food is good for you. Just because cranberry juice contains Vitamin C doesn't mean it's a health food. There is too much sugar to justify the benefits of Vitamin C.
- **“Made with real fruit”** often refers to fruit concentrate. Even when it does refer to real fruit, it is typically found in small quantities and isn't even the same kind of fruit pictured on the package.
- **“Made with whole grains”** does not mean the product is 100% whole grain. Many labels claim a product is whole grain but the product actually contains refined flour as the first ingredient and the amount of whole grain is minimal.
- **“All natural”** foods aren't as natural as the claim to be. If you can't read the ingredient list, it's probably not “all natural.”
- **What does it mean to be organic?** Organic foods are grown and produced without the use of harmful chemicals. Look for foods with the USDA organic label when shopping.

Remember: Read the food labels to know what you're really eating!