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Food Label Use and Its Relation to Dietary Intake among US Adults

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Abstract

Rates of diet-related chronic disease combined with the lack of current data on patterns of food label use by the US population warrant re-examination of the use and potential influence of this public health tool. The purpose of this study was to describe the prevalence of food label use and the association between food label use and nutrient intake in a nationally representative sample of US adults who participated in the 2005-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Data on food label use were collected during the interview portion of the survey, and nutrient intake was estimated using the average of two 24-hour dietary recalls. In this sample, 61.6% of participants reported using the Nutrition Facts panel, 51.6% looked at the list of ingredients, 47.2% looked at serving size, and 43.8% reviewed health claims at least sometimes when

deciding to purchase a food product. There were significant differences ($P<0.05$) in food label use across all demographic characteristics examined. Significant differences ($P<0.05$) in mean nutrient intake of total energy, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, dietary fiber, and sugars were observed between food label users and non-users with label users reporting healthier nutrient consumption. The greatest differences observed were for total energy and fat and for use of specific nutrient information on the food label. Despite food label use being associated with improved dietary factors, label use alone is not expected to be sufficient in modifying behavior ultimately leading to improved health outcomes.



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