

# Front of package food labels do not mean a food is healthy

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American grocery shoppers face an array of front of pack (FOP) nutrition and health claims when making food selections. But relying on the front of pack (FOP) claims to determine the nutrition quality of the food may not be a consumer's best option.

In the January issue of the *Journal of Food Science* study, published by the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT), researchers from The Ohio State University and Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia examined and analyzed front of pack [nutrition](#) claims on more than 2,200 breakfast cereal and prepared meals released for sale between 2006 and 2010. What they found was that no type or number of front of pack claims could distinguish "healthy" foods.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has specifically defined four types of FOP nutrition marketing claims including: [health claims](#), qualified health claims, structure/function claims and nutrient claims (FDA, 2009). Claims such as "may reduce the risk of heart disease," "low-fat," and "cholesterol-free" compete for attention among other front, side, or back of pack messages and symbols (Wanskink, 2004). In addition claims like organic, natural, or local may be perceived as indicators of nutrient content. But these claims don't necessarily suggest higher nutritional quality meaning consumers should still look at the Nutrition Facts panel to make more informed product choices.

**More information:** Debra Schaefer et al. Are Front of Pack Claims Indicators of Nutrition Quality? Evidence from 2 Product Categories,

*Journal of Food Science* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/1750-3841.13150](https://doi.org/10.1111/1750-3841.13150)

Provided by Institute of Food Technologists

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