

# The 'Decoder Ring'

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## Label Lingo

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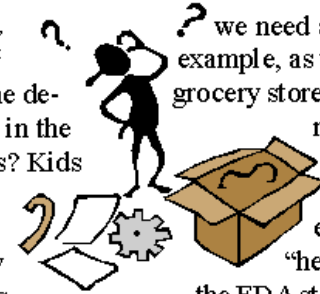
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By Leighanna Konetski,  
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Do you remember the decoder ring that came in the Ovaltine drink mixes? Kids all across America would listen to a radio show where they would be given clues.

They would crack the clues using their decoder ring, revealing secret messages. Although Ovaltine no longer distributes decoder rings in its drink mixes, the same strategy that helped children decipher clues can help us all make sense of the various health claims that we see every day in the grocery store. In 1990 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) started allowing companies to place nutrient content claims and health claims (short simple statements) on food packaging. Words started popping up on foods that we hadn't seen before, like *low-fat*, *reduced sodium* and *healthy*.

The FDA began mandating that foods meet certain standards before they could be labeled with certain claims. (This protects us from false health claims.) The government wanted us to use these terms as clues, to help guide our food choices and compare foods more easily. The clues are out there, but before they can be of benefit we need to understand what they mean—



we need a decoder ring. For example, as you walk through the grocery store you notice that a number of foods claim to be "healthy," but what exactly makes food "healthy?" According to the FDA standards, before any food can be called "healthy" it must contain no more than 3 grams (g) of fat, 1g of saturated fat, 360 milligrams (mg) of sodium, or 60mg of cholesterol per serving. The food must also supply at least 10% of the daily value for at least one of six nutrients: vitamins A, and C, calcium, iron, protein, and fiber. In addition, raw meat, poultry or fish can be labeled *healthy* if it contains, per serving, no more than 5g of fat, 2g of saturated fat, 360mg of sodium and 95mg of cholesterol. It must also supply at least 10% of the daily value for at least one of the six nutrients listed above. Rest assured that each food that is labeled *healthy* actually meets the above standards. There are many other food label terms that you should become familiar with, especially if you are following a specific diet due to health concerns. In this newsletter you will be given a decoder to help understand label terms and what they mean. Then test yourself on the Label Lingo Word Search.

# Label Lingo Word Search



L X L U X I B I L E E A T H S  
 K X B X G T S T I E U F E N U  
 L G Q R C M G R D W B A Z M G  
 M O D R C N O K W Y L A F Z A  
 J Z W Y V L D U D T P D L J R  
 G Y A S A H I G H F I B E R F  
 M X X C O F V Y E G B E W M R  
 I T W C H D E E R F T A F Y E  
 A O K D J F I M Q V H V A S E  
 L P L X Y M D U V K S X Q C O  
 C T Z P S W E R M Y Y Y L J R  
 B K U R O Y K K Q Z R T R B H  
 J J L X Q M O M R L S G T I D  
 Z S G C E A U J X P W W O K O  
 U A T P P B J S Q B I L U R L



Find the below words in the above word search.

CLAIM  
 FATFREE  
 HEALTHY  
 HIGHFIBER  
 LABEL  
 LOWCALORIE  
 LOWSODIUM  
 SUGARFREE



## Remember

- Always read the label or the claim on the foods you eat
- Know and understand what the claims mean and how this affects your diet and health

Answers to last months crossword.

**Across** 2. Lycopene 5. Indoles 6. Limonoids **Down** 1. Flavonoids 3. Thiols 4. Color

# Quick Fix Recipe of the Month

## Gingerale Baked Apples

Yield: 4  
Serving size: 1 apple



### Ingredients:

- 4 baking apples
- 4 tablespoons golden raisins
- 4 teaspoons brown sugar
- 1/2 cup gingerale

### Method:

1. Core apples without cutting through the bottom. Stand apples in baking dish just large enough to hold them.
2. Place 1 tablespoon raisins and 1 teaspoon brown sugar in center of each apple.
3. Pour a little gingerale into the center of each apple.
4. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes, basting frequently, until apples are tender but not mushy.
5. Serve warm or chilled.

*Recipe from, 'Low Fat & Light  
Four Ingredient Cookbook.'*

**Lou's**

## Food Safety Tip of the Month: If In Doubt, Throw it Out!

There always seems to be a rhyme or saying to go along with some of the most bizarre things. Food safety is no exception. When it comes to any food and the safety of it, the saying goes, "If in doubt, throw it out!" This saying helps everyone to remember that if you aren't sure how long you've had something



in the refrigerator, or in the pantry, the safest measure would be to throw it away instead of trying it first, or eating it altogether. This little saying can be heard softly being muttered in kitchens all across America. Say it with me now—"If in doubt, throw it out!" Keep yourself safe by practicing this little tip.

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Apple (183g)

Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

**Calories 130**      **Calories from Fat 0**

% Daily Value\*

**Total Fat 0g**      **0%**

Saturated Fat 0g      **0%**

**Cholesterol 0mg**      **0%**

**Sodium 10mg**      **0%**

**Total Carbohydrate 34g**      **11%**

Dietary Fiber 4g      **16%**

Sugars 29g

**Protein 1g**

Vitamin A 2%

• Vitamin C 10%

Calcium 2%

• Iron 4%

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less Than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less Than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less Than	300mg	300 mg
Sodium	Less Than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

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The Volunteers of America is a national non-profit, spiritually-based human services organization. Since 1896 Volunteers of America Colorado Branch has been seeking to identify and serve the basic needs of the most vulnerable individuals and families in our community. If you would like information on how you can get involved, please call us at:

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Ask for Meals on Wheels.

*Meals on Wheels is funded in part by the Denver Regional  
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## Labels & Health Claims Can Be Misleading

Today information is at your fingertips. With the expansion of media there has been remarkable progress in sharing of information. What used to be available to only a select few is now available to millions. You can find information on just about any topic when you search on the internet. But like most good things, there is also a down side. With so much information available its easy to become overwhelmed by it all. Even worse, its more and more difficult to keep fact from fiction. Labels and health claims on foods are no exception. Many companies place false health claims on their foods. A general rule of thumb to keep you sane in the health claim world is the rule: 'If it sounds to good to be true, it probably is.' A good example of this would be if a product claims to reverse aging, it probably will not work. There are things that have been proven to play a positive role in the aging process, but there is nothing that will **reverse** it. There are very



few FDA approved diet-disease related health claims that can be put on foods. The following are some claims that are approved for use. For a complete list of approved diet-disease related health claims please call the nutrition office.

- Calcium and a **reduced risk** for osteoporosis
- Sodium and an **increased risk** of hypertension
- Dietary fat and an **increased risk** of cancer
- Dietary saturated fat and cholesterol and an **increased risk** of coronary heart disease
- Fiber-containing grain products, fruits and vegetables and a **reduced risk** of cancer
- Potassium and a **decreased risk** of hypertension
- Fruits and vegetables and a **reduced risk** of cancer

**The bottom line, if you don't buy the health claim, don't buy the product!**

# Approved Nutrient Content Claims Decoder

**“FREE”:** This term means the product does not contain, or contains only a negligible amount, of the nutrient preceding the word free. Fat-free salad dressings, for example, contain less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.

**“LOW”:** Products labeled low cannot contain more than a set amount of the nutrient in question. These levels have been set low enough to allow frequent intake without concern about going over dietary recommendations. More specifically:

- **Low sodium:** no more than 140 milligrams (mg) of sodium per standardized serving size
- **Very low sodium:** no more than 35mg of sodium per standardized serving size
- **Low calorie:** no more than 40 calories per standardized serving
- **Low fat:** no more than 3 grams (g) of fat per standardized serving
- **Low saturated fat:** no more than 1g of saturated fat per standardized serving and 15% or less of calories from saturated fat
- **Low cholesterol:** no more than 20mg of cholesterol per standardized serving

**“REDUCED” OR “LESS”:** When you see either of these terms on the label it means the product contains at least 25% less of a nutrient or calories than the regular product.

**“LIGHT” (or “LITE”):** This term means the product has 1/3 fewer calories per serving than a comparable product, or 50% less fat or sodium per serving than found in a comparable product.

**“GOOD SOURCE”:** The product provides between 10-19% of the daily value of the nutrient being described.

**“HIGH”, “RICH IN” OR “EXCELLENT SOURCE”:** The product provides 20% or more of the daily value for a nutrient.

**“MORE”:** If a product contains at least 10% more of the daily value for a nutrient per serving than a comparison food, it can use the term “more” on its label, for example “Now with more calcium!”

**“LEAN”:** This term is used to label meat, poultry, seafood and game meats that contain less than 10 grams fat, less than 4.5 grams saturated fat, and less than 95 milligrams cholesterol per standardized serving.

**“EXTRA LEAN”:** Meat, poultry, seafood and game meats using this label contain less than 5 grams fat, 2 grams saturated fat and 95 milligrams cholesterol per standardized serving.

**“HEALTHY”:** The product must be low in fat and saturated fat, contain no more than 60 milligrams of cholesterol and 360 milligrams of sodium per serving. It must also provide at least 10% of the daily value for vitamin A, vitamin C, protein, calcium, iron or fiber.

*Information for the above approved nutrient content claims taken from ‘Understanding Nutrient Content Claims on Food Label’, by Pat Kendall, Ph.D., R.D., Colorado State University Cooperative Extension, February 2001, and ‘A Food Labeling Guide’, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition.*

# Health Quackery: It's NO Joke

By Leighanna Konetski, Community Nutritionist

Health scams and people called “Quacks”—people who sell unproven remedies- have been around for thousands of years. Now, with the information and technology age developing rapidly, you can quickly find information on any topic. What used to be available to only a select few is now accessible to millions. With so much information available it's easy to become overwhelmed and even worse, it's more and more difficult to separate fact from fiction. The internet alone has brought each of us the ability to search, read news, and watch live streaming video in other countries, all from the comfort of our home. Using this new technology, quacks have a very easy way to peddle their goods. With websites most offer miracle cures and e-mails share testimonials of those who have suddenly been cured. With a chronic disease threatening you or a loved one, it's easy to understand why one would want to believe these claims and fall prey to such scams. Unfortunately, older adults are often the target of these scams and a government study found that most victims of health care fraud are over the age of 65. The good news is that you can protect yourself from these scams and from being the next victim of a quack's fraud. The National Institute on Aging has come up with some signs that should send up red flags when you are reading or hearing an ad or promotional material. Look for the following things as a warning sign when the product..

- Promises of a quick or painless cure
- Claims product is made from a special, secret, or ancient formula— often only available by mail or from one sponsor
- Use of testimonials or undocumented case histories from satisfied patients
- Claims to be effective for a wide range of ailments
- Claims to cure a disease, such as arthritis or cancer, that is not yet understood by medical science
- Offers an additional “free” gift or a larger amount of the product as a “special promotion”
- Requires advance payment and claim limited availability of the product

In addition to the above red flags, the National Institute on Aging also listed the following as popular topics that quacks promote products for. Watch out for these.

- Anti-aging
- Arthritis Remedies
- Cancer Cures
- Memory Aides

The bottom line: be wary. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Always check with your doctor before buying or taking any new product. If you have questions about a product, you can talk with your doctor or contact Quackwatch, Inc, a nonprofit corporation dedicated to making information available to combat health-related frauds, myths, fads and fallacies at: [www.quackwatch.org](http://www.quackwatch.org). The National Institute on Aging is also available to help you decipher fact from fiction; you can call them toll-free at 1-800-222-4225.

*Information for this article was taken from 'National Institute on Aging, Age Page, Health Quackery: Spotting Health Scams.'*