

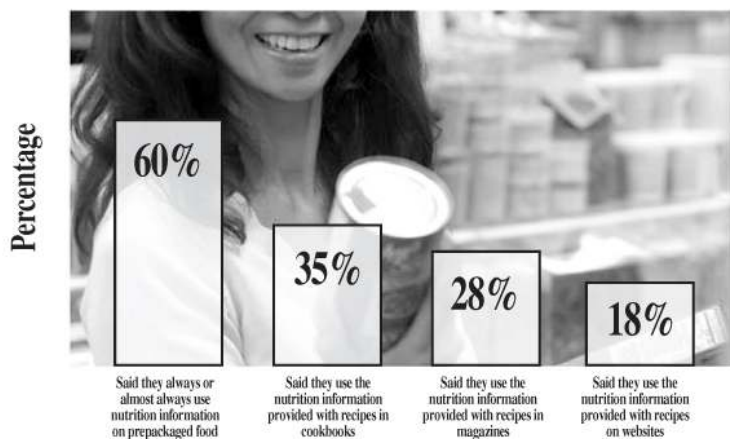


Poll STATION

With Linda Banister

A nutritious and balanced diet is fundamental to good health. Nutrition labels provided on packaged food or with recipes provide the information needed to make healthy food choices. This month's *Poll Station* asked Edmontonians about their use of this nutritional analysis information.

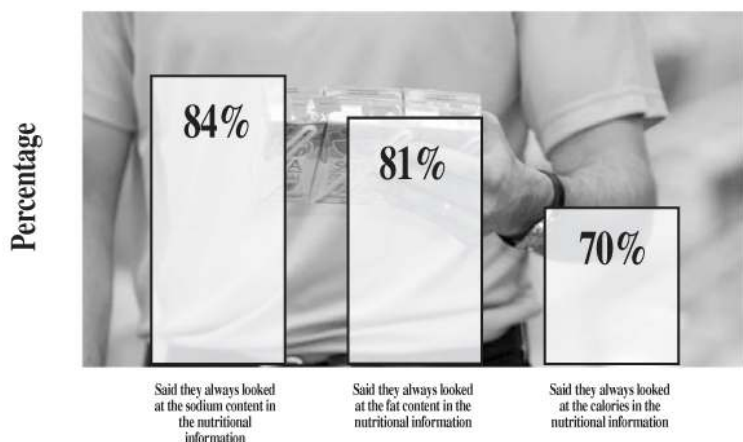
DO YOU USE NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION WHEN PURCHASING OR PREPARING FOOD?



Respondents were first asked how often they use the nutritional analysis information that is provided on a variety of items. Sixty percent of respondents reported they always or almost always use the nutritional information on prepackaged food, 35 percent use the information provided with recipes in cookbooks, 28 percent use it in magazine recipes, and 18 percent always or almost always use the information provided with recipes on websites. Eighteen to 20 percent of respondents reported they sometimes use the nutritional information provided on the various items.

Respondents who reported they never use the nutritional information provided (10 percent to 45 percent) were asked why not. The most frequent reasons were not using recipes in cookbooks, magazines or online or not purchasing prepackaged foods, and not being concerned about nutritional analysis.

WHICH ITEMS ON THE NUTRITIONAL LABELS ARE OF MOST INTEREST TO YOU?



Respondents were then asked which items on the nutritional labels they checked. The most commonly viewed items were sodium (84 percent), fat (81 percent), and calories (70 percent). When asked if they believed that the nutritional labeling helped them make informed choices for healthy living, 87 percent indicated that they believed it did. The 12 percent who did not believe it helped were asked why they felt that way. Thirty-three percent reported they don't pay attention to the nutritional information, and another 33 percent indicated they still do what they want regardless of the information provided.

SHOULD NUTRITIONAL LABELING BE MANDATORY FOR RECIPES IN PRINT AND ON-LINE?

In December 2007, it became mandatory to include nutrition labeling on all prepackaged foods. When asked if they were aware that the labeling was mandatory, 66 percent of respondents indicated that they were. Respondents were then asked if they believed nutritional labeling should also be mandatory for all recipes in magazines and cookbooks. Of the 67 percent who indicated it should be mandatory, 28 percent of them said they wanted to know what they're eating, 24 percent wanted the analysis for health purposes, 24 percent wanted to know the nutritional information, and 22 percent felt it would help make informed decisions. Thirty-two percent of respondents did not believe the labeling should be mandatory. Their reasons included labeling not being necessary (31 percent), ingredients already having the nutritional information on the packages (31 percent), and that people will still do what they want regardless of the information provided (28 percent).

When asked if nutritional labeling should be mandatory for recipes on websites, 59 percent indicated "yes" because they want to know the nutritional information (27 percent), for health purposes (25 percent), and to make informed decisions (20 percent). Reasons provided by the 32 percent who felt nutritional information should not be mandatory for recipes on websites included that nutritional information about the ingredients is already provided on the packaging (50 percent), and that people will still do what they want (31 percent). ✓

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Contact Linda at 780.451.4444 or e-mail
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