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**SUPERMARKETS GET IN THE GAME OF NUTRIENT PROFILING:  
SHELF TAGS COULD BE DISPLAYING MORE THAN PRICES AS STORE CHAINS  
LAUNCH NUTRITION SYMBOLS TO HELP SHOPPERS IDENTIFY HEALTHY FOODS**

CHICAGO – For years, manufacturers, trade associations and health organizations have used nutrition symbols on food packaging to help shoppers identify health benefits of products. Now, supermarkets are rolling out their own profiling systems, adding symbols and scores to shelf tags beneath food products.

Will the assortment of symbols and scores help shoppers make healthier food choices? Experts from the American Dietetic Association recently looked at five current or upcoming nutrient profiling programs in supermarket chains across the country – including nutritional criteria, which foods are rated and where symbols would appear – and how four popular food products would score among the programs. (See accompanying chart.)

“Nutrition symbols can assist people in the grocery store, but they do not provide the whole picture on how these foods can fit into a healthy lifestyle,” says registered dietitian and ADA spokesperson Amy Jamieson-Petonic.

“Many factors go into a person’s nutrient needs, such as age, height, weight, gender, physical activity level or predisposition to various health conditions. So ‘healthy choices’ mean different things to different people,” Jamieson-Petonic says.

Another factor that could potentially add to consumer confusion is that each nutrient profiling program uses different criteria or algorithms to rate food products, so while one program may rate a food product “high in nutrition,” that same product may receive a low score from different program, Jamieson-Petonic says.

Food manufacturers, trade associations and health organizations began developing nutrition symbols in the mid-1990s. While the graphics vary in format and design, the most prevalent placement of these symbols are on the front of food packaging. Today there are spots, stamps and other symbols on food products, but some research suggests these symbols are not yet resonating with consumers.

According to ADA’s *Nutrition and You: Trends 2008* public opinion survey, 67 percent of consumers rate diet and nutrition as “very important,” while 35 percent list food package labels as credible sources of nutrition information. And fewer than 10 percent of respondents identify food manufacturers as credible sources.

A recent article in *Nutrition Today* found consumers are more likely to consider purchasing a product if a nutrition-health connection is clearly identified. For example, “calcium-rich foods such as yogurt may reduce the risk of osteoporosis” was found to be more effective than an on-package message identifying yogurt simply as “a good source of calcium.” Another study in *Appetite* found consumers are more likely to trust nutrition symbols that are endorsed by third parties such as health organizations, and the simpler the symbol or icon, the better.

Whether shoppers will find the latest shelf-tag and on-package nutrition symbols helpful remains to be seen, but they are no substitute for the individualized counseling, meal planning and nutrition expertise of a registered dietitian, Jamieson-Petonic says.

“As the food and nutrition expert, the RD is specially qualified to guide consumers on how foods can fit into their lifestyle, not to mention provide the most nutritional bang for your buck,” she says.

Below are summaries of five current or upcoming nutrient profiling programs:

### **GUIDING STARS**

**Stores:** Hannaford's, Bloom, Food Lion, Sweet Bay

**Where symbols will appear:** Shelf tag

**Description:** Currently in East Coast store chains with launches in other supermarkets across the country by Fall 2009, Guiding Stars was developed by an advisory panel including scientists from Dartmouth Medical School and the University of North Carolina. Proprietary algorithms are used to rate foods for nutrition quality. One star is good; two stars is better; three stars is best. Of the more than 60,000 products that have been evaluated, about 28 percent qualify for at least one star. Foods that do not qualify for any stars will not receive a scored shelf tag.

### **HEALTHY IDEAS**

**Stores:** Giant Foods, Stop & Shop

**Where symbols will appear:** Shelf tag, plus on package for some private label brands

**Description:** Developed for Giant Food and Stop & Shop supermarkets by an advisory panel of physicians and nutritionists and affiliated with Harvard Medical School, Healthy Ideas rates foods using nutrition threshold criteria. Many foods not considered important sources of nutrients are not rated. All fresh produce automatically qualify for the symbol, and other foods such as pretzels, chips, popcorn and granola bars are rated because they are considered to be important sources of grains. Approximately 4,000 packaged foods, or 28 percent of a typical grocery store, qualify for the shelf-tag symbol. The symbol will also appear on package for selected store brands.

### **NUTRITION IQ**

**Stores:** Acme, Albertson's, Jewel-Osco, Biggs, Cub Foods, Farm-Fresh, Hornbacher's, Lucky, Shaw's/Star Market, Shop'n Save, Shoppers

**Where symbols will appear:** Shelf tag

**Description:** Developed by Supervalu Inc. in collaboration with the Joslin Diabetes Center, the Nutrition iQ profiling system uses color-coded shelf-tag bars to identify foods that meet specific nutrient thresholds. If a food qualifies for a nutrient content claim, it is identified with a color-coded shelf-tag. For example, the shelf tag for a low-calorie, high-fiber product would have an orange (fiber) stripe and a purple (low-calorie) stripe. No food will have more than two shelf tags and approximately 10 percent of grocery items receive a shelf tag. The program will roll out across Supervalu's grocery stores nationwide over the next six months.

### **NUVAL**

**Stores:** Price Chopper, Hy-Vee, Giant-Eagle, Meijer

**Where symbols will appear:** Shelf tag

**Description:** Developed by an advisory panel convened at Yale University School of Medicine at Griffin Hospital, NuVal (formerly Overall Nutrition Quality Index, or ONQI) scores all foods on a scale of 1 to 100. The higher the score for a product, the higher the nutrient content of that product. More than 30 nutrients are factored into the algorithm. Several thousand stores across the country are slated to begin using the NuVal system by fall.

### **SMART CHOICES PROGRAM**

**Stores:** All stores that sell foods manufactured by Coca-Cola, ConAgra Foods, PepsiCo, Kraft Foods, General Mills, Kellogg Company, Unilever, Wal-Mart

**Where symbols will appear:** On package

**Description:** Developed by a coalition of food manufacturers with input from the Keystone Center Round Table, the Smart Choices Program rates foods according to nutrient thresholds. Products that qualify for the symbol also will display front-pack calorie information with calories per serving and number of servings per container. This self-imposed and self-regulated nutrient profiling system will start appearing in stores in June, and by late fall, many on-package nutrition symbols currently used by the participating food manufacturers will become obsolete, including Sensible Solutions (Kraft), Smart Spot (PepsiCo), Nutrition at a Glance (Kellogg's), Nutrition Highlights (General Mills) and Eat Smart, Drink Smart (Unilever).

The American Dietetic Association is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA is committed to improving the nation's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy. Visit the American Dietetic Association at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

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# How would these foods score?

While not all food products are rated by every nutrient profiling system, the programs agreed to participate in an illustration of how four popular name-brand products *would* score with their system. Ratings are for theoretical example only and may not appear with the actual product in stores.

## Perdue Perfect Portions® Skinless Boneless Chicken Breast



Serving Size: 4.8 oz.  
**Amount Per Serving (%DV)**  
**Calories** 130  
**Total Fat** 1.5g (2%)  
 Saturated Fat 0g  
 Trans Fat 0g  
**Cholesterol** 80mg (27%)  
**Sodium** 350mg (15%)  
**Total Carbohydrate** 0g (0%)  
 Sugars 0g  
**Protein** 29g  
**Calcium** (0% DV)  
**Iron** (8%)  
**Vitamin A** (0%)  
**Vitamin C** (2%)

**Guiding Stars**  
 Would qualify for 3 stars\*\*



**Healthy Ideas**  
 Would qualify for symbol



**Nutrition iQ**  
 Not rated\*

NOT RATED

**NuVal**  
 Would score 39 out of 100\*\*



**Smart Choices**  
 Would not qualify for symbol



Nutrition Facts Source: [perdue.com/products/product\\_detail.html?category\\_id=3&id=367](http://perdue.com/products/product_detail.html?category_id=3&id=367)

\* Nutrition iQ currently does not rate fresh meats, poultry or fish.

\*\* Guiding Stars and NuVal reflects unseasoned boneless, skinless chicken breast regardless of brand.

## Dannon Light&Fit Vanilla Yogurt



Serving Size: 6 oz. (170g)  
**Amount Per Serving (%DV)**  
**Calories** 80  
**Total Fat** 0g (0%)  
 Saturated Fat 0g  
 Trans Fat 0g  
**Cholesterol** <5mg (1%)  
**Sodium** 75mg (3%)  
**Potassium** 230mg (7%)  
**Total Carbohydrate** 16g (5%)  
 Sugars 11g  
**Protein** 5g (10%)  
**Vitamin A** (8%)  
**Calcium** (15%)  
**Vitamin D** (20%)  
**Riboflavin** (15%)  
**Phosphorus** (15%)  
*Not a significant source of Dietary Fiber, Vitamin C and Iron.*

**Guiding Stars**  
 Would qualify for 2 stars



**Healthy Ideas**  
 Would qualify for symbol



**Nutrition iQ**  
 "Excellent source calcium" | "Good source protein"



**NuVal**  
 Would score 81 out of 100



**Smart Choices**  
 Would qualify for symbol



Nutrition Facts Source: [lightnfit.com/products/light\\_and\\_fit/light\\_and\\_fit.html](http://lightnfit.com/products/light_and_fit/light_and_fit.html)

## Planters® Lightly Salted Cocktail Peanuts



Serving Size: 1 oz.  
**Amount Per Serving (%DV)**  
**Calories** 170  
**Total Fat** 15g (23%)  
 Saturated Fat 2g (10%)  
**Cholesterol** 0mg (0%)  
**Sodium** 55mg (2%)  
**Total Carbohydrate** 5g (2%)  
 Dietary Fiber 2g (7%)  
 Sugars 1g  
**Protein** 7g  
**Calcium** (0%)  
**Iron** (2%)  
**Vitamin A** (0%)  
**Vitamin C** (0%)

**Guiding Stars**  
 Would qualify for 3 stars\*\*



**Healthy Ideas**  
 Would not qualify for symbol



**Nutrition iQ**  
 Would not qualify for symbol



**NuVal**  
 Would score 23 out of 100\*



**Smart Choices**  
 Would qualify for symbol



Nutrition Facts Source: [planters.com/varieties/peanuts.aspx](http://planters.com/varieties/peanuts.aspx)

\* Estimated score.

## Kellogg's Frosted Flakes Cereal



Serving Size: 3/4 cup  
**Amount Per Serving (%DV)**  
**Calories** 110  
**Total Fat** 0g (0%)  
 Saturated Fat 0g (0%)  
 Trans Fat 0g  
**Cholesterol** 0mg (0%)  
**Sodium** 140mg (6%)  
**Potassium** 20mg (1%)  
**Total Carbohydrate** 27g (9%)  
 Dietary Fiber 1g (3%)  
 Sugars 11g  
 Other carbohydrate 15g  
**Protein** 1g  
**Vitamin A** (10%)  
**Vitamin C** (10%)  
**Calcium** (0%)  
**Iron** (25%)  
**Vitamin D** (10%)  
**Thiamin** (25%)  
**Riboflavin** (25%)  
**Niacin** (25%)  
**Vitamin B<sub>6</sub>** (25%)  
**Folic Acid** (25%)  
**Vitamin B<sub>12</sub>** (25%)

**Guiding Stars**  
 Would not qualify for any stars



**Healthy Ideas**  
 Would not qualify for symbol



**Nutrition iQ**  
 Would not qualify for symbol



**NuVal**  
 Would score 22 out of 100



**Smart Choices**  
 Would qualify for symbol



Nutrition Facts Source: [www2.kelloggs.com/Product/ProductDetail.aspx?product=450](http://www2.kelloggs.com/Product/ProductDetail.aspx?product=450)  
 NOTE: Above reflects cereal alone.

Source: American Dietetic Association