

**FDA Nutrition Symbols Focus Group Study
Appendix II - Moderator Guide**

OMB No. 0910-0497

1. Warm-up (5 minutes)

1.1. Standard housekeeping remarks (including permission to videotape the session, use of videotapes in report writing, and the statement “Your participation and everything you say during the discussion will remain anonymous and confidential.”)

1.2. First name, how many people live in the household, most frequented grocery stores

2. General attitudes and practices about foods, diets, nutrition and label use (10-15 minutes)

2.1. What are the words you use to describe your thoughts and feelings about a typical food shopping trip for you? How does nutrition compare to other characteristics of foods, such as prices, convenience, taste, when you try to decide what products or brands to buy?

2.2. What challenges or difficulties, if any, do you find in thinking about nutrition when you try to decide which food or brand to buy?

2.3. Where do you get your information about how nutritious or healthy different foods and brands are? Impressions on the different sources, their credibility and usefulness?

3. UNAIDED reactions to symbols – SAME nutrition profile, DIFFERENT symbol concepts on the front panel (30-35 minutes)

NOTE to moderator:

- *distribute Label Sheet # 1 (see Appendix III);*
- *explain the contents of the sheet and mention the Nutrition Facts panel on the back;*
- *tell participants they will be expected to talk about their reactions to these labels;*
- *explain it is the same product for all five labels, differences on the front panel, but same information on the Nutrition Facts panel;*
- *(Three minutes after distribution) explain task – ask participants to rank the five labels in the square box below each label in the order of how good a job you feel a label does in telling you about the nutrition characteristics of the product. Use the numbers 1 through 5, 1 to mean the best job, 2 second best job, and 5 the worst job. Same score to more than one label allowed;*
- *mark the back of the label sheets beforehand to identify each participant.*

(Wait three minutes)

3.1. (Repeat questions 3.1.1 – 3.1.5 for each label.)

3.1.1. What is your first reaction?

3.1.2. What does this (*point to the symbol*) tell you about the nutrition characteristics of the product?

3.1.3. How easy or difficult is it for you to understand the symbol?

3.1.4. How helpful is the information if you wanted to find out how much, say calories, fat, sugar, or fiber this product has?

3.1.5. How useful is this information in helping you decide whether to buy this product, to compare between products, to find out what's in the product, etc?

3.2. Who has seen any one of these symbols on food packages before?

3.3. How likely would you be to notice them if you were buying a cereal product?

4. AIDED symbol reactions – SAME set of labels; with an explanatory note for each symbol printed below the symbol (30-35 minutes)

NOTE to moderator:

- distribute Label Sheet # 2 (see Appendix III);
- explain that some of you might not be sure what some of the symbols mean and this sheet provides some explanations;
- ask them to read the sheet and repeat the ranking exercise.

(Wait five minutes)

4.1. *(Repeat questions 4.1.1 – 4.1.6 for each label.)*

4.1.1. How easy or difficult is it for you to understand the symbol?

4.1.2. How helpful is the information if you wanted to find out how much, say calories, fat, sugar, or fiber this product has?

4.1.3. How useful is this information in helping you decide whether to buy this product, to compare between products, to find out what's in the product, etc?

4.1.4. How reliable is this information in accurately describing the nutrition characteristics of the product?

4.1.5. Does anyone give this label a higher ranking this round than last round? What has made you change your mind?

4.1.6. Does anyone give this label a (*emphasize*) lower ranking this round than last round? What has made you change your mind?

4.2. How much do you feel the additional information is helpful in telling you about the nutrition characteristics of the product? If you wanted to decide whether to buy the product, how likely would the additional information have changed your mind?

4.3. *(Mention the five symbols may just be how five different companies present the nutrition information for the same product. And, the additional information shows that each symbol has a different rule that a product must follow to have the symbol.)*

4.3.1. If you see one cereal product has one symbol and another has another symbol, does the variety help or not help you choose between products?

4.3.2. If symbols are to be standardized, which of the four rules (for Labels B-E) should be used so the symbols are most useful to you?

4.4. *(Explain two different rules demonstrated in the labels. One rule, Label C ("Healthy") or Label D (shelf tag), awards the symbol only when a product meets all criteria for a number of nutrients. The other rule, Label B (good source), awards individual symbols as long as the product meets the criterion for that particular nutrient.)* Which of these two rules is more helpful in telling you about the nutrition characteristics of the product?

- 4.5. *(Explain that only the symbol on Label E (signposting) shows both what's more positive about the product, low fat, and what's more negative about the product, high sugar. On the other hand, symbols on Labels B, C, and D show only what's more positive about the product.)* Which of these two methods is more helpful in telling you about the nutrition characteristics of the product?
- 4.6. Are the symbols useful for all consumers or useful only for those who may need to watch their diet for any reason?
- 4.7. How useful these symbols would be if they are printed on restaurant menus?
5. **Standard closure (1-2 minutes)** *(Collect all materials.)*