

Industry Embraces Transparency and Science With Updates to the Supplement Facts Label: How CRN Can Help You be Label Wise

By Brian Wommack, Senior Vice President, Communications, CRN

Imagine a consumer looking at two similar bottles of a favorite dietary supplement. The bottles look nearly identical. Same product name, same manufacturer name, same strength and dose information. But when the consumer scrutinizes the supplement facts label, each bottle has slightly different information listed. How can this be? Which one is right?

As a member of this industry, would you be able to advise this hypothetical consumer? Are you aware of what's going on that could cause this hypothetical situation to become all too real?

Maybe you remember something about the supplement facts label changing, but you don't quite remember the phase-in dates. That's fair—they've changed several times. But it's time to key in on the changes and to think about how best to inform consumers about what's going on and to reassure them that this is an expected, and welcome, improvement in transparency.

The most noticeable changes will be in the new percent daily values (DV) for certain nutrients. These will be updated to reflect the latest in nutrition science and how American diets have changed over the years. For a product that has not been reformulated, DVs will change on all nutrients for which new DVs have been established. In some cases, products may have been reformulated so that they will continue to provide 100 percent of a DV, even if the DV has changed.

In some cases, the change in DV could appear to be dramatic. For instance, the DV for biotin has decreased from 300 mcg to 30 mcg. Therefore, if a product previously provided 100 percent of the daily value for biotin and was not reformulated, it will now be listed as providing 1,000 percent of the DV on the new label.

Other changes will occur in the units of measure. For instance, for vitamins A, D and E, the measure will change from international units (or IU) to more common measures of mil-

ligrams and micrograms. While this will require a bit of adjustment from what consumers are used to seeing, this should in the long run provide more clarity since these measures are relatable beyond the world of nutrition.

Folic acid—one of the most important nutrients before and during pregnancy—will now be listed as folate and measured in micrograms of dietary folate equivalent or DFEs.

The list of nutrients considered under-consumed by Americans has also been updated, based on new understanding of requirements and American dietary habits. Calcium, potassium, dietary fiber and vitamin D are all now considered nutrients of public health concern and will be required on labels. Potassium and vitamin D are newly added to the list. Vitamins A and C have dropped off of the list of under-consumed nutrients and are no longer mandatory on the label.

Finally, if sugar is added to a product, the amount and percent DV will be listed on the label as well.

All of these changes are coming to better provide consumers the information they need to make informed choices about their health. These labels have not been updated in many years, and it is well beyond time for a refresh.

Comply Dates

Because the dates for compliance have been changed several times, some manufacturers are already complying with the new regulations. But for manufacturers with \$10 million or more in sales, they aren't required to comply until Jan. 1, 2020. And for smaller manufacturers, the compliance date is Jan. 1, 2021. The compliance date is tied to the date the label is placed on the product, not the date that the product appears in stores. So, depending on supply chains and quickness of product



turnover, old labels will appear for a while even after these compliance dates. And, as noted in the opening hypothetical, it is possible that both an old and a new label could appear on shelves at the same time.

When consumers understand the reasons for the change, they will recognize that this is just another example of a regulated industry following along with the newest rules put out by a vigilant FDA (U.S. Food and Drug Administration).

How can you help consumers become more informed? The Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN) has created a whole suite of materials to educate consumers. A short explainer video, a fact sheet, and an infographic are all available at belabelwise.org. These resources are free for the taking for members of industry to use, not only with their consumers, but also with retailers and health care practitioners. CRN hopes that industry will adopt these tools, make them their own and share them widely as they communicate with consumers about these changes. After all, it is in everyone's interest that we understand and are able to explain these important improvements in the dietary supplement facts panel. So go ahead, commit to consumer label literacy and be Label Wise!



Brian Wommack is the senior vice president, communications of the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), a leading trade association for the dietary supplement and functional food industry.