

# Decode Your Labels

## *A Practical Guide to Reading Food Labels & Spotting Hidden Ingredients*

Email: [jane@thehumanfuelproject.org](mailto:jane@thehumanfuelproject.org)

TikTok: @thehumanfuelproject

This guide is for informational purposes only and is not medical advice.

The front of the package lies. The truth is in the fine print - the ingredient list and nutrition label.

If you want to reclaim your energy, reduce inflammation, and escape Metabolic Hell, the first step is to stop falling for front-of-package marketing and start reading what's really inside.

### **Top 12 Red Flag Ingredients to Watch For:**

#### **- Seed Oils**

Canola, soybean, corn, sunflower, safflower, cottonseed - Linked to chronic inflammation and oxidative stress.

#### **- Added Sugars**

High-fructose corn syrup, cane sugar, dextrose, maltodextrin - Drives insulin resistance and liver fat.

#### **- Artificial Sweeteners**

Sucralose, aspartame, acesulfame potassium - May disrupt gut microbiome and insulin signaling.

#### **- Natural Flavors**

A legal loophole that can include hundreds of chemicals.

#### **- Carrageenan**

Thickener linked to gut irritation and inflammation.

#### **- MSG & Glutamates**

Excitotoxins that can overstimulate the nervous system.

#### **- Emulsifiers**

Polysorbates, soy lecithin, mono/diglycerides - Can compromise gut barrier function.

#### **- Preservatives**

BHA, BHT, sodium benzoate - Linked to endocrine disruption in some studies.

#### **- Color Additives**

Red 40, Yellow 5, Blue 1 - Potential neurobehavioral effects, especially in children.

#### **- Enriched/Wheat Flour**

Stripped of nutrients, spikes blood sugar, adds no value.

#### **- Gums and Fillers**

Xanthan gum, guar gum, cellulose - May cause digestive distress in sensitive individuals.

#### **- 'Low Fat' or 'Sugar Free' Labels**

Often loaded with synthetic chemicals to make up for flavor loss.

#### **Ask Yourself When Reading a Label:**

- Do I recognize these ingredients as food?
- Would my great-grandmother know what this is?
- Are there more than 5-7 ingredients?
- Is sugar listed in the first 3 ingredients?
- Are there additives I can't pronounce?

#### **Quick 'Human Fuel' Label Checklist:**

- Fewer ingredients = better
- No industrial oils
- No added sugars or sweeteners
- No mystery 'natural flavors'
- Real whole food ingredients (things you could buy individually)

#### **Clean Label Swaps**

Instead of Canola oil, try Avocado oil, olive oil, ghee

Instead of Breakfast cereal, try Steel-cut oats, chia pudding

Instead of Flavored yogurt, try Plain Greek yogurt + berries

Instead of Granola bars, try Handful of nuts + dates

Instead of Salad dressings, try Homemade: olive oil + lemon or vinegar

Instead of Sugary drinks, try Sparkling water with fruit, herbal teas

**Final Word:**

Learning to read food labels is like learning a second language - awkward at first, powerful once fluent.

You don't have to be perfect. You just need to be aware.

Every better choice you make chips away at Metabolic Hell. And soon, you'll start to feel like you again.

*For an in-depth breakdown of food additives and label safety, visit the Center for Science in the Public Interest:*

*<https://www.cspinet.org/eating-healthy/chemical-cuisine>*