

The Distance Between Food Labels and Healthy Eating

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by Daniel Buckley

I recently came across a [New York Times video](#) in which William Nuemann discusses the difference between food labels and the way people actually eat. As the leading organization working to fight food poverty in New York City, the Food Bank works hard to create a healthy New York — and understanding food labels is very important part of building a healthy diet for yourself and your family.

If you are trying to lose weight or fight high blood pressure — and if, like most New Yorkers, you have very little time to put toward building the perfect, balanced menu every night — you are probably going to glance at that label for the amount of fat or sodium contained. Then what happens?

The Food Bank's Community Nutritionist, Christina Riley, offers regular [workshops](#) to help our [food assistance network](#) answer that exact question. Each lesson starts by asking participants to note how many servings are in a can of food, then determine how that effects the nutrition facts on that label. At a glance, the label on a can of green beans appears to say that the beans provide 15 percent of your daily value of sodium. However, a can of beans has 3.5 servings — and if you eat the whole can, you need to multiply the sodium by 3.5. This means that the can actually contains 52.5 percent of your daily value of salt. And that leaves precious little room for salt in the rest of your meals or snacks that day if you are going to stay in a healthy range. Just thinking about trying that has my blood pressure rising.



If you don't read carefully and do a little math, you can easily be misled — but I won't go on about that, since William Nuemann says it so well:

