### Scientific Studies Related to Menu Labeling

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| More people are eating out at fast-food restaurants and the number of fast-food restaurants is growing. | • Quick-service restaurant sales in the United States are projected to increase by 4.4 percent in 2008, with sales of $156.8 billion.¹  
• There are approximately 266,300 fast-food restaurants in the country. That number is expected to increase to almost 287,500 by 2009.²  
• In 2006, Americans spent almost half (48 percent) of their food dollars on foods made outside the home, in comparison to 26 percent in 1970.³  
• Fast-food is eaten disproportionately by low-income people, who are more likely to be overweight.⁴  |
| Portion sizes are bigger, and people are consuming more calories when eating out. | • Standard portion sizes in fast-food and chain restaurants have grown since the 1970s: Typical soft drink servings have increased by 49 calories, french fries servings have increased by 68 calories and hamburgers by 97 calories.⁵,⁶  
• People eat more at a restaurant than at home.⁷  
• Adults eating at fast-food restaurants consume 205 more calories per day than those who do not eat out; children consume 155 more calories.⁸  
• A survey of 7318 diners at fast-food restaurants in New York City found that one third purchased 1,000 calories or more for a lunchtime meal.⁹  
• Children consume almost twice (1.8 times) as many calories when eating food made outside the home, compared to eating at home.¹⁰  
• Fast-food restaurants use marketing to give the impression that the larger portion sizes are “normal.” The prices on much larger portion sizes increase only slightly, which leads customers to make unhealthy choices.¹¹  
• Americans’ average calorie intake increased by almost 200 calories per day between 1977 (average: 1,791 calories) and 1996 (average: 1,985). Restaurants and fast-food accounted for the fastest growing source of those calories.¹²  |
| Excess fast-food calorie consumption may contribute to weight gain.    | • A national survey conducted between 1977 and 1996 showed that calorie consumption from restaurant fast-food doubled as a percentage of energy intake for people over the age of 2.¹³  
• Eating extra calories while eating out contributes to excess energy intake.¹⁴,¹⁵  
• Eating out more frequently at fast-food restaurants is associated with a higher total intake of energy.¹⁶  
• In a study of more than 4,700 children between 11 and 18 years, boys who ate fast-food regularly consumed 800 extra calories per week, and girls consumed an extra 660 calories per week. This could add a weight gain of 10 or more pounds per year.¹⁷  
• Eating more calories away from home causes an increase in weight.¹⁸,¹⁹,₂₀,₂₁,₂₂,₂₃  
• There is strong evidence of a causal association between eating fast-food and gaining weight.  
  • Fast-food intake was associated with increased body weight in a study of 3,031 adults.²⁴  
  • More days of fast-food intake at baseline predicted increases in body mass index after five years, in a study of 10,000 adolescents.²⁵  
  • Fast-food intake increased the prevalence of overweight by 27-31 percent in a study of over 9,000 adults²⁶  
  • Adolescents between 12 and 19 who ate foods away from home were more likely to have a higher body mass index.²⁷  |
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<td>People are unaware of how many calories are in their meals.</td>
<td>• Restaurant goers underestimate the calories, and overestimate the healthfulness of menu items.</td>
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<td>• In a poll of 523 adults, only 11 percent could identify which of four choices from Denny’s and McDonald’s were highest in calories.</td>
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<td>• A study found that 9 out of 10 people underestimated the number of calories of less-healthy items by an average of more than 600 calories.</td>
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<td>• In a poll, experienced nutrition professionals underestimated the number of calories in restaurant food by 200 to 600 calories.</td>
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<td>Consumers want and use nutrition information.</td>
<td>• Three out of four American adults use food labels on packaged foods. Seventy-three percent say that they look at the calorie information on the Nutrition Facts Panel.</td>
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<td>• Almost half (48 percent) of American adults say reading the nutrition information on food labels made them change their purchasing habits.</td>
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<td>• When given nutrition information on food served in restaurants, diners are 24 to 37 percent less likely to choose high-calorie menu items.</td>
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<td>• A study in New York City showed that the fast-food customers who saw calorie information displayed bought 52 fewer calories than those who didn’t see the information.</td>
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<td>• A majority (62 to 87 percent) of consumers in six nationally representative polls said they support requiring restaurants to list nutrition information.</td>
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<td>Posting calorie information may encourage chains to improve the nutritional content of their menus.</td>
<td>• Processed food manufacturers have reformulated many of their products to contain less trans fat following the Food and Drug Administration mandate to list trans fat content on the Nutrition Facts Panel of foods sold in retail stores.</td>
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| Some, but not all, fast-food restaurants make nutrition information available. The information is not always accessible to customers at the point of purchase. | • In McDonald’s outlets in Washington, DC, 59 percent provided in-store nutrition information for the majority of their standard menu items; 40 percent did not provide it.  
In 62% of the restaurants, it was necessary to ask two or more employees in order to obtain a copy of the information. |
|                                                                      | • In New York City, 95 percent of survey respondents did not notice nutrition information provided by McDonald’s because it was not prominently displayed at the point of purchase.  It was on brochures, placemats, food wrappers, or on the Internet. |
|                                                                      | • In a study of 300 of the largest chain restaurants, 54 percent made some nutrition information available; 44 percent had information on the majority of standard menu items; 86 percent provided the information on a website. |
Society for Nutrition Education. The United States Food and Drug Administration’s Obesity Working Group. |
REFERENCES FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDIES

13. Ibid.
REFERENCES FOR SCIENTIFIC STUDIES, cont.


47. Ibid., p.11.


Compiled by Roberta R. Friedman, Director of Public Policy
Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity
309 Edwards St.
New Haven, CT 06511
(203) 432-4717
roberta.friedman@yale.edu