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Guiding Stars **Frequently Asked Questions**

Q: What is *Guiding Stars*?

A: *Guiding Stars* is an at-a-glance system created to offer shoppers a quick tool to use if they're interested in making more nutritious choices of more 35,000 foods in Food Lion supermarkets. The new navigation system was developed to complement the more detailed information on the Nutrition Facts label and ingredients list found on food packaging.

Q: Why did Food Lion invest in this program?

A: Food Lion is committed to adding value to the Food Lion shopping experience. Based on feedback received from shoppers in 2004 that revealed confusion and frustration regarding shopping for nutritious foods, Food Lion began developing the system. Since then Food Lion has tested the concept both qualitatively (focus groups) and quantitatively (surveys), revealing that *Guiding Stars* will give shoppers who are interested in choosing more nutritious foods a solution to their shopping challenges.

Q: How can shoppers be sure that *Guiding Stars* is grounded in science?

A: The *Guiding Stars* system was developed by a scientific advisory panel of nutrition experts from top institutions including the University of North Carolina, Dartmouth Medical School, Tufts University, Harvard University, University of California, Davis, and the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine. In addition to being experts themselves, the advisory panel drew from extensive research coming from leading national health organizations, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Academies of Science and the World Health Organization.

Q: What criteria are considered for assigning Stars to individual foods?

A: The *Guiding Stars* system assigns values for a variety of elements found on the Nutrition Facts label and ingredient list. For foods that are not labeled, like meat, fruits, seafood, and vegetables, the system uses information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's national nutrient database. A consistent unit of 100 calories is used to make comparisons across foods possible. Foods are credited for vitamins and minerals, dietary fiber and whole grains and debited for *trans* fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, added sugars and added sodium. The number of Stars assigned is based on the food's total score.

Q: Why are dietary components with proven health benefits like omega3 fatty acids, monounsaturated fats, and phytochemicals not included in the *Guiding Stars* scoring criteria?

A: Omega3 fatty acids and monounsaturated fat are not included because they are not consistently listed on the Nutrition Facts label and cannot be found on the ingredient list if they occur naturally in a product (e.g. salmon, walnuts). Phytochemicals are not included because there are no standard dietary recommendations or requirements from which to draw upon. If some of these attributes become a regular part of labeling practices and/or regulatory bodies make standardized recommendations, *Guiding Stars* will be updated to include them.

Q: Are there other systems in the marketplace similar to *Guiding Stars*?

A: No. *Guiding Stars* is the first in-store, storewide navigation system that recognizes a range of attributes found in foods. The “traffic light” system in the UK considers only the negative attributes of foods. And, unlike other systems currently offered or on the horizon, *Guiding Stars* is not limited to just store-branded products or just packaged goods.

Q. What is the difference between 1, 2 and 3Starred foods?

A. *Guiding Stars* is a good, better and best ranking. Compared to a 2Star food, for example, a 3Star food has more vitamins, minerals and/or whole grains and less *trans* fats, saturated fats, cholesterol, added sugars and/or added sodium.

Q. If a food does not have a Star, does that mean it is a bad food or a junk food, and shoppers should not buy those foods?

A. No. Many foods do not get Stars, either because they do not meet the nutritional criteria for a star or because they haven't been rated. Often, just one element will prevent a food from receiving a Star such as added sugar, sodium, etc. All foods can fit into a healthful eating plan. Of course you can still enjoy foods without Stars, just remember to balance those foods with more nutritious foods and a healthy active lifestyle.

Q. What percent of foods in the store get Stars?

A. Approximately 28% of the 25,550+ analyzed food products have one or more Stars.

Q. How many foods in each section of the store get Stars?

A. The percentages by store section are as follows:

- 100% of fruits & vegetables
- 51% of cereals
- 41% of seafood
- 22% of dairy
- 21% of meat
- 7% of soups
- 7% of bakery (41% of breads & rolls)

Q. Are the foods with the most Stars the most expensive items in the store?

A. The system and scoring are blind to cost. The value of this program is that Food Lion is offering shoppers a quick tool they can use if they're looking for more nutritious options.

Q. Are the *Guiding Stars* criteria the same for all foods in the store?

A. Meats, poultry, seafood, dairy and nuts are naturally higher in saturated fats and, with the exception of nuts, are naturally higher in cholesterol and do not have fiber. (Only animal products contain cholesterol.) The formula recognizes these natural differences.

Q. Why are meat, poultry, seafood, dairy and nuts scored differently?

A. If we used the same measurement for this category, few – if any – items would receive Stars and our shoppers would not be able to distinguish the leaner choices. So the scientific advisory panel of experts established slightly different criteria for these items. FDA's definition of "healthy" for this category makes a similar distinction.

Q. Why are some foods not rated?

A. Foods are *not rated* for one of three reasons.

- Foods like coffees, teas, spices, bottled waters and other items that have less than 5 calories per serving do not contribute significant calories or nutrients to be rated.
- Baby foods will be rated effective September 15, 2007.
- Fats and oils will be rated by early 2008.

Q. How is it possible for frozen fruits and vegetables to receive just as many Stars as fresh?

A. In most cases, frozen produce is just as "nutrient rich" as its fresh counterpart. Starred frozen fruits and vegetables have little or no added sugars, sodium or fats.

Q: If a fruit and a cereal both get 3 Stars, does that mean they are equally nutritious?

A: Not necessarily. Every food group has a unique combination of attributes. As you go through each aisle of the supermarket, *Guiding Stars* can help identify more nutritious options within that section. Some sections like produce will have lots of starred choices because fruits and vegetables are almost all naturally packed with nutrients. Other sections of the store, like the snack aisle, for example, will have many fewer stars since these products are relatively high in calories and have far fewer nutrients.

For example, among nutrient rich choices, when shopping for:

- **Cereals:** Cereals with less added sugars and more whole grains are likely to have *Guiding Stars*
- **Meats, Seafood, Poultry and Dairy:** You're likely to see *Guiding Stars* by choices with less saturated fat and cholesterol
- **Soups:** Soups with less added sodium get Stars
- **Breads:** *Guiding Stars* highlight choices with less trans fat and added sugars, and more whole grains and dietary fiber

Q: *The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* highlight the importance of dark leafy greens and deep orange fruits and vegetables. Why then do both dark and light salad greens receive 3 Stars?

A. Since most fruits and vegetables are rich in nutrients relative to the calories they contain, most of them receive 3 Stars. The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend we eat a greater variety of fruits and vegetables, especially the dark green and orange ones, since they contain nutrients that many of us don't normally get enough of.

Q. If we are supposed to eat more low-fat dairy products to get enough calcium, why do so many yogurts receive zero Stars?

A. Most yogurts are a good source of calcium. However many yogurts and yogurt products have added sugars and/or are not low fat or fat-free and therefore don't qualify for a Star.

Q. In terms of Stars, why aren't there differences between organic and conventional foods?

A. *Guiding Stars* analyzes nutrient data solely from FDA's Nutrition Facts label and USDA's nutrient database. Neither of these sources recognizes any nutritional differences between foods that are conventional, natural and/or organic. Therefore, there is no distinction made by *Guiding Stars*.