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**Title: Food and drug labels: pay attention to these.**

A healthy body is your most valuable asset and you must be careful what you feed it. We often focus on the expiry dates on the products we purchase from the shelves, but is that all? This blog explores important aspects that must be taken into consideration when buying items from the shelves of supermarkets, pharmacies and other points of sale. Rarely do people pay attention to the inscriptions on these items before purchase, so end up using them without knowing the true components.

Normally, essential items like food and drugs are packaged in cans, bottles and little paper boxes with special information for the consumer, either enclosed with information about the product on a leaflet or written on the container itself. The consumer is therefore expected to read and understand the information which is normally written in clear official language for easy comprehension. For instance, drug packages are enclosed with information on their desired and side effects, drug interactions, allergies and other vital information about the drug.

Food and drug labels help ensure that the buyer avoids some forbidden ingredients in the product that could cause potential health problems. For example, people with hypertension are supposed to avoid some level of sodium and cholesterol in their diet. By virtue of the fact that many canned foods have high levels of such ingredients, reading the product label enables such a person to avoid the harmful effects of using the contents of the can. Also, those with allergy to food components like gluten are able to effectively select gluten-free cereals by reading enclosed leaflets in the can, thus avoid the possible adverse effects of consuming the product.

It is thus dangerous for one to buy an item without knowing some important details of the item especially if the components are quite lethal to the health of the consumer. Also, some packages look so much alike that they could be mistaken for each other. The inability of people to read product information has led to the worsening of various health conditions thus is a serious issue of public health concern.

The following are **some** of the **important** things you should lookout for:

1. **The label should not be in a foreign language unfamiliar to you:** If you cannot pronounce or read the language in which the label is written, chances are, the item is not certified as wholesome for your consumption.
2. **Number of calories per serving:** calories refer to how much energy you gain per the serving of food at a particular time. In order to know the total calories in your food, add the values of carbohydrates, fats and proteins indicated on the label in the ingredients section, and multiply the answer by the number of servings of the food you are consuming. This helps to guide you to plan how much serving of the food you should consume at a time especially when you are on a planned diet regime.
3. **Items you may be allergic to:** If you are one of those who know their allergies, lucky you because

avoiding an allergic attack is just a reading away. However, if you are unaware of the allergen that normally worries you, constantly reading labels could help you identify them and eventually help you select your products appropriately.

4. **Drug precautions and other drug interactions:** Apart from drug overdose, it is dangerous for people with certain health conditions to use certain types of drugs. For example, peptic ulcer patients are not supposed to use NSAIDS like Diclofenac since it may lead to exacerbation of their condition. Also, some drugs when taken in combination with others could be lethal. One must therefore read leaflets to ensure that they avoid aggravating their existing conditions as a result of certain drug combinations.

Do not only read user manuals of machines you purchase. Always ensure to take a moment to read leaflets and labels of edible products like food and drugs before use, as this could save your life. Stay safe!!!