When choosing snacks, food labels can help

There is a credit card commercial that asks, “What’s in your wallet?” It implies that if you carry a certain brand of credit card, you will have many benefits.

If we are what we eat, then what we are is plastered on the cover of every package of food we consume. Yet, when it comes to snacks, we might not even pay attention.

A snack, after all, isn’t expected to be healthy, is it?

Common packaged snacks include chips, candy, cookies and bars. Research evidence indicates that checking out a few areas of the Nutrition Facts food label can help you evaluate the benefits of the snacks you want to eat.

Nutrition Facts provide a variety of information about the food within the box, bag or container. Understanding that information can lead to wiser decisions on food -- and snack -- choices.

The serving size is standardized by cups or pieces to help in comparisons with other food.

Saturated and trans fat are fats linked to increased chronic disease risk such as heart disease and cancer.

Sodium tends to be high in processed foods and can increase the risk of elevated blood pressure.

Whole foods or snacks rich in dietary fiber are shown to be beneficial for weight control, diabetes, heart disease and some forms of cancer.

Vitamins and minerals can improve health and help reduce risk of some diseases and conditions. Eating enough of these nutrients can improve your health and reduce the risk of chronic diseases.

Whatever your favorite packaged snacks are, knowing and comparing food labels is just one way of making choices.

What’s on your snack plate?