



Speaker Notes:

A lot of the foods we eat come in packages. Food labels tell us about the food or drink in the package (bottle, jar, box ,etc.). We are going to explore food packages with two detectives, Detective Sarah and Detective Frank, and find out what information is provided on them.

Teacher Background:

- This lesson includes a conversation between Detective Sarah and Detective Frank.
- Optional: consider asking for student volunteers to voice each of these roles, reading the text from the screen to the class.
- For a PowerPoint version of this presentation, please contact: publichealth.nutrition@ahs.ca

Optional Props:

Bring empty food packages for students to investigate throughout the lesson.

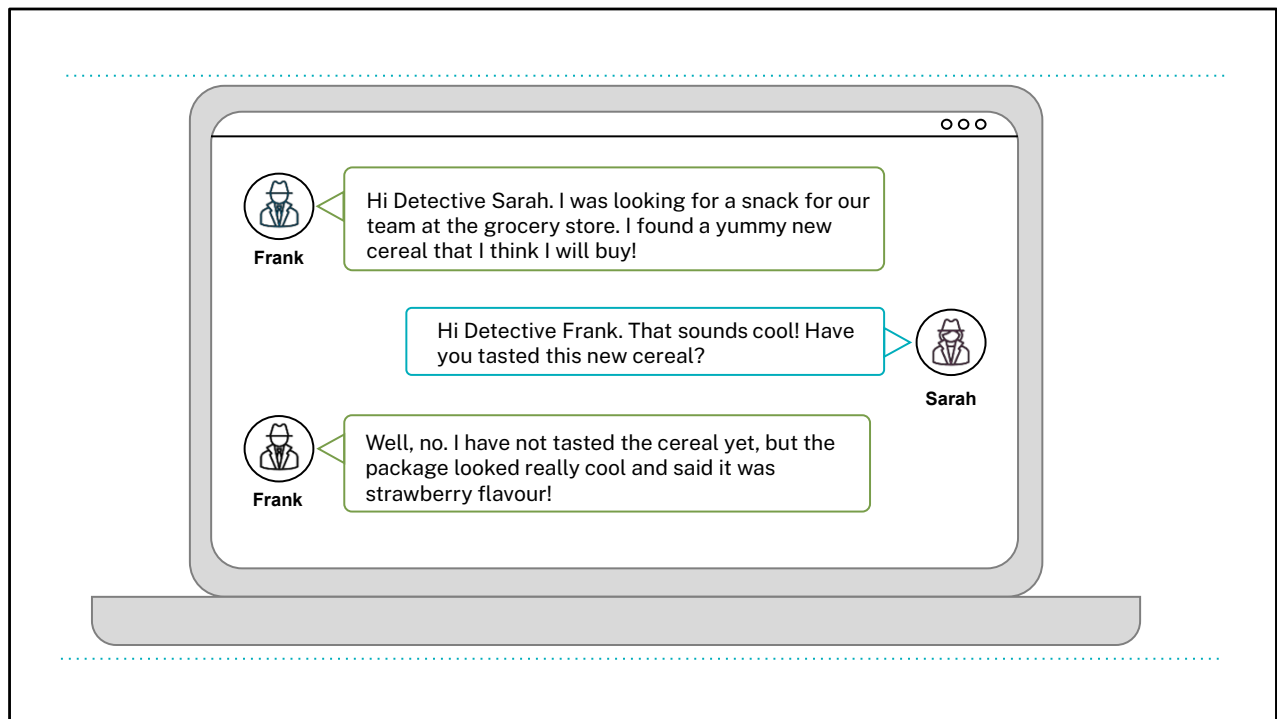
- Packages with targeted marketing to children are ideal (e.g. kid's cereals, snacks, canned pasta, juice, etc.)
- Foods with different types of labels (gluten free, Kosher, Halal, supplemented, fortified, etc.) will also be helpful in the second part of the lesson.

Image sources for presentation:

Microsoft 365 icons and stock images

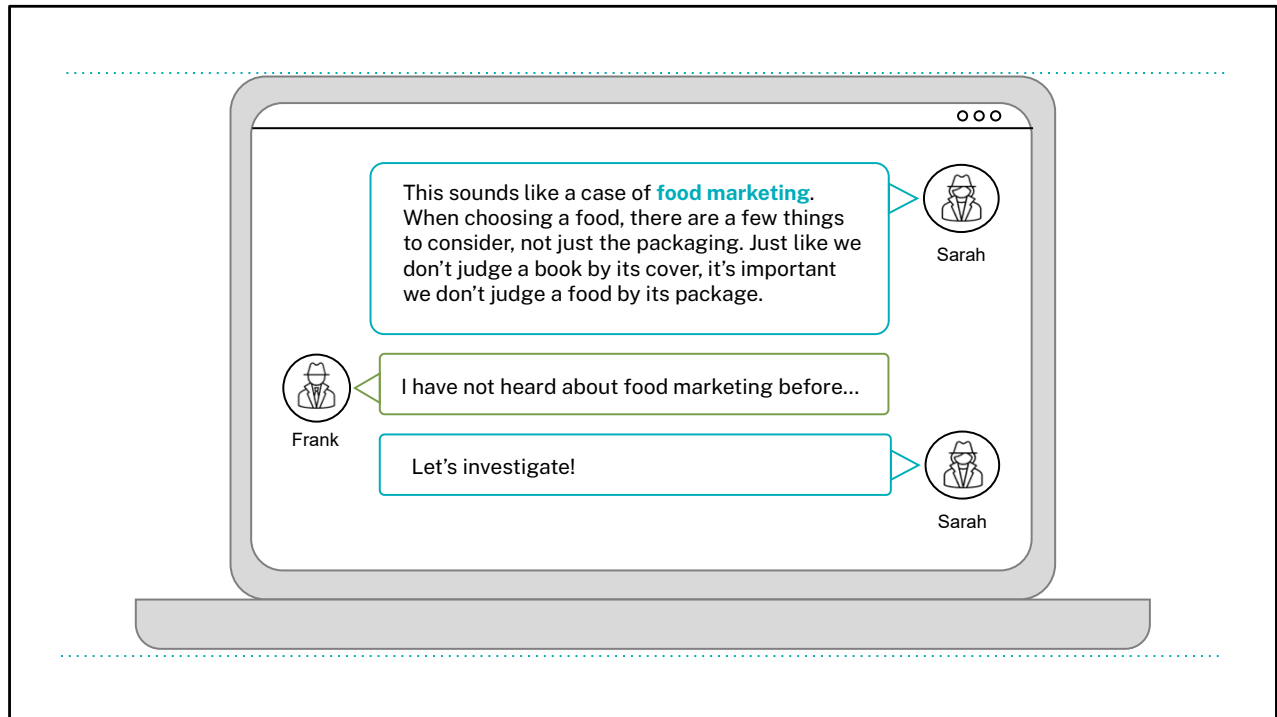
©2025 Alberta Health Services, Nutrition Services

This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial Share Alike 4.0 International license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/). The license does not apply to AHS trademarks, logos or content for which Alberta Health Services is not the copyright owner. This material is intended for general information only and is provided on an "as is", "where is" basis. Although reasonable efforts were made to confirm the accuracy of the information, Alberta Health Services does not make any representation or warranty, express, implied or statutory, as to the accuracy, reliability, completeness, applicability or fitness for a particular purpose of such information. This material is not a substitute for the advice of a qualified health professional. Alberta Health Services expressly disclaims all liability for the use of these materials, and for any claims, actions, demands or suits arising from such use.



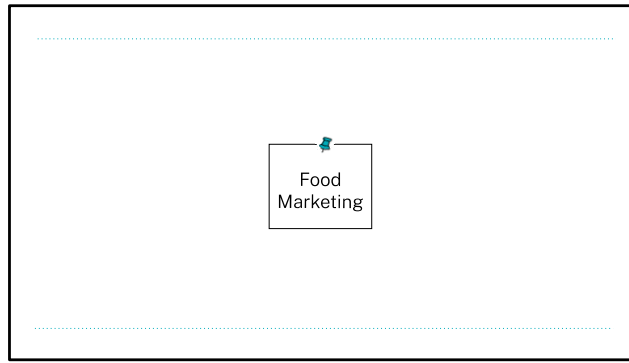
Speaker Notes:

- Read through the conversation on the slide.



Speaker Notes:

- Read through the conversation on the slide.
- **Ask:** Does anyone know what food marketing is?
 - Answer on next slide



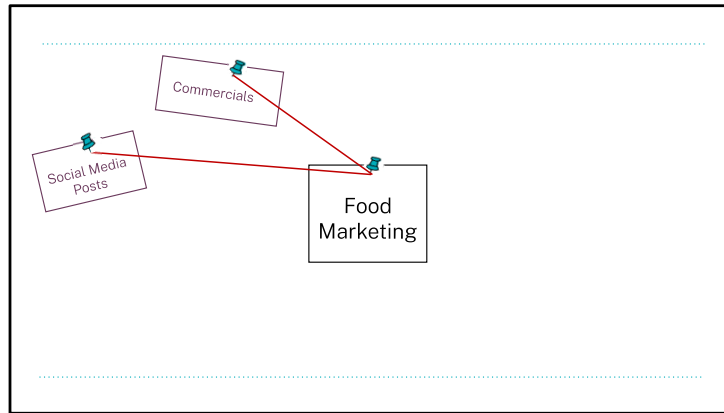
Click through slides 5-9 to reveal examples of food marketing. The examples will appear in order of the notes pages outlined below. Have students share examples as you discuss different aspects of food marketing.

Speaker Notes:

Food marketing: is the advertising of food products to get people to buy them. There are many ways food companies can advertise their food.

Reference

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Marketing can influence your food choices. 2020 Oct 14. Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>



Speaker Notes:

How do food companies advertise their food or drinks?

Commercials:

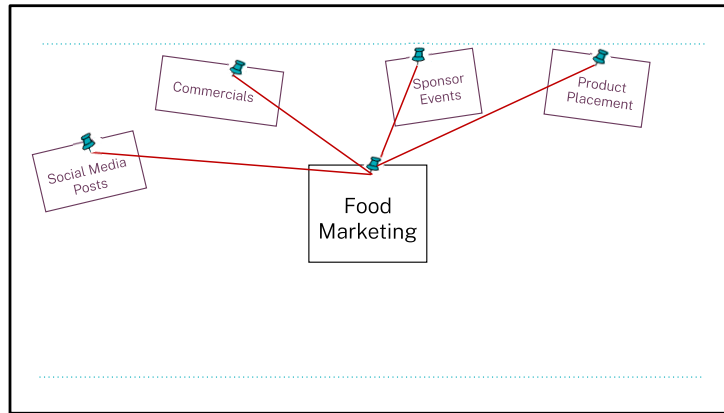
- Food commercials can be on TV, radio, apps, internet, sporting events (hockey game) and elsewhere.

Social Media Posts

- Companies can use a variety of social media sites to post about their food products.

Reference

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Marketing can influence your food choices. 2020 Oct 14. Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>



Speaker Notes:

How do food companies advertise their food or drinks?

Sponsor Events

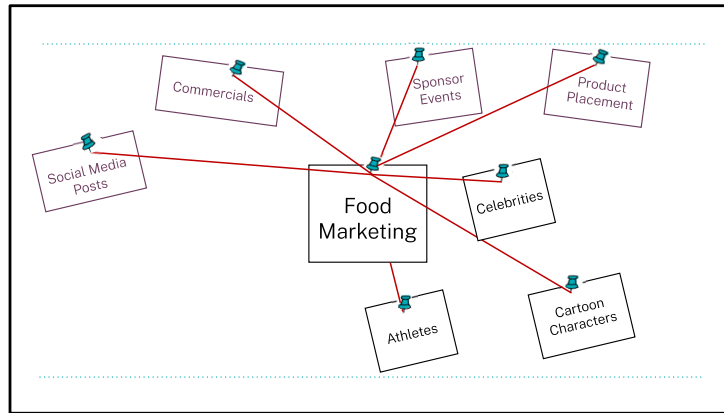
- Food companies may sponsor community events or international events like the Olympics

Product placement

- Food companies can pay to have their food item in a TV show, movie, magazine, a post on social media.

Reference

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Marketing can influence your food choices. 2020 Oct 14. Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>



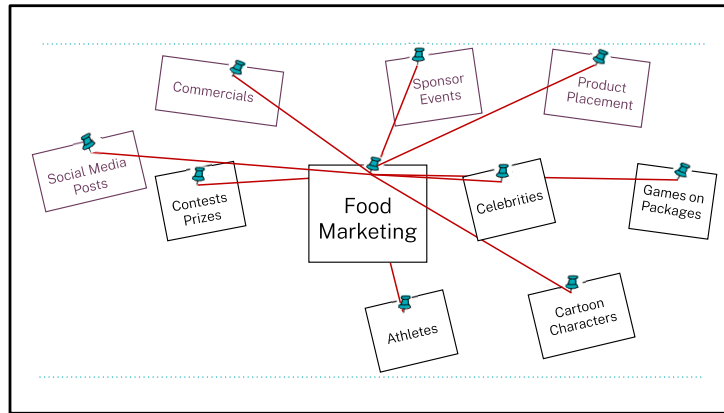
Speaker Notes:

What do food companies use to get to get people interested in their products, especially kids?

- Celebrities, athletes or cartoon characters in their commercials or food packages
- Contests and prizes – information on the package
- Games on the package
- Portray their food or drink having benefits, such as energy, strength or speed.
- Bright colours
- Fun food shapes

Reference

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Marketing can influence your food choices. 2020 Oct 14. Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>



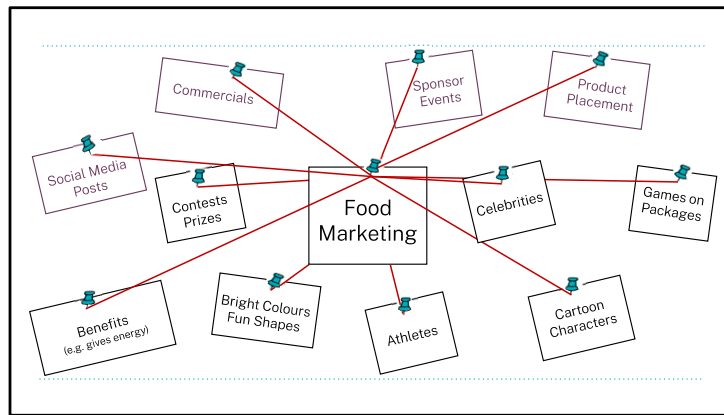
Speaker Notes:

What do food companies use to get to get people interested in their products, especially kids?

- Celebrities, athletes or cartoon characters in their commercials or food packages
- Contests and prizes – information on the package
- Games on the package
- Portray their food or drink having benefits, such as energy, strength or speed.
- Bright colours
- Fun food shapes

Reference

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Marketing can influence your food choices. 2020 Oct 14. Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>



Speaker Notes:

What do food companies use to get to get people interested in their products, especially kids?

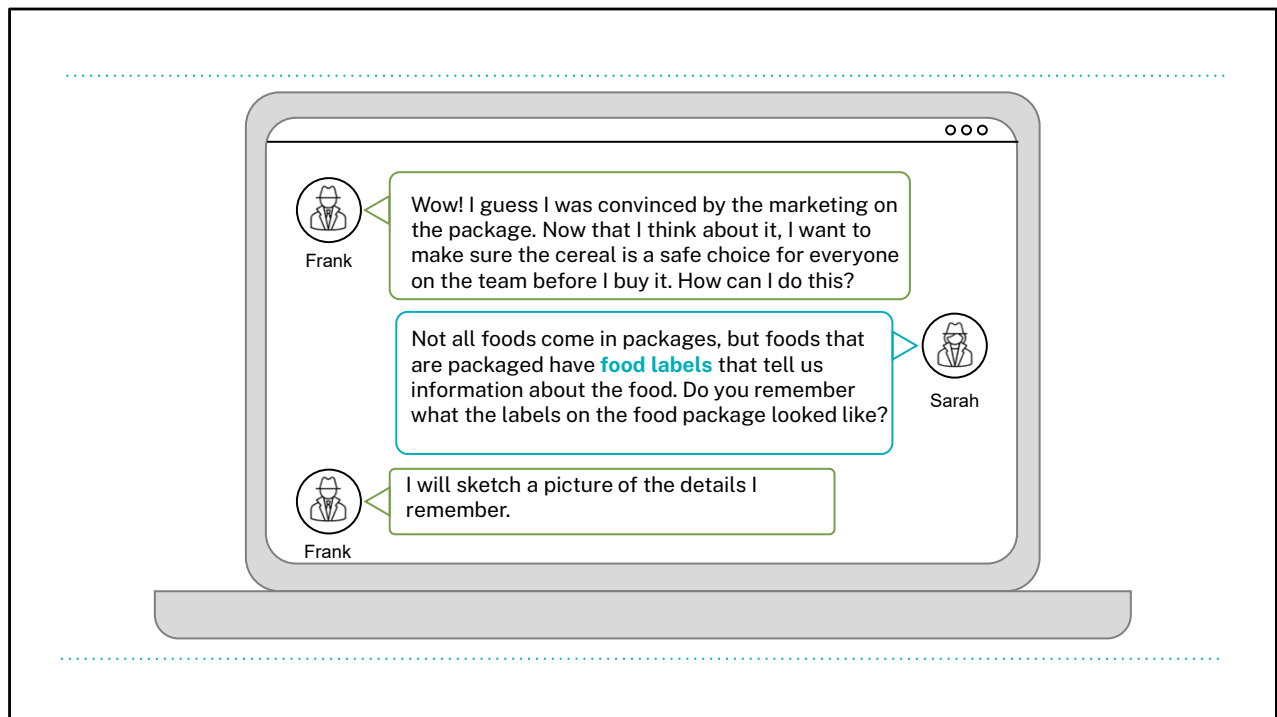
- Celebrities, athletes or cartoon characters in their commercials or food packages
- Contests and prizes – information on the package
- Games on the package
- Portray their food or drink having benefits, such as energy, strength or speed.
- Bright colours
- Fun food shapes

Does food marketing work?

- Yes, food marketing can influence our decisions about food. It is all around us and sometimes we may not even notice it.
- It is important we are aware of the strategies food companies use to market their products to us, so that our decisions are not only based on the package, but on other things as well, such as the food/drink providing lasting energy, family culture, taste and texture preferences.
- Just as we don't judge a book by it's cover, it's important we don't judge a food by its package.

Reference

Health Canada. Canada's food guide: Marketing can influence your food choices. 2020 Oct 14. Available from: <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-eating-recommendations/marketing-can-influence-your-food-choices/>

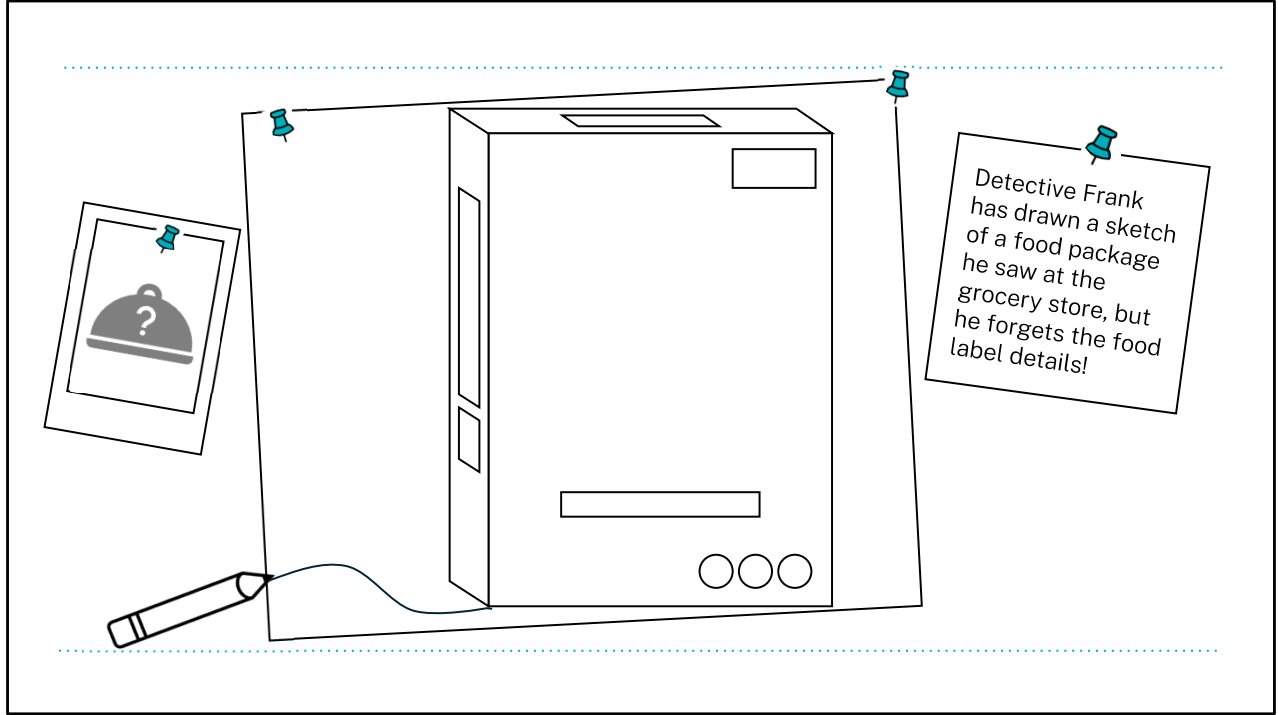


Speakers Notes:

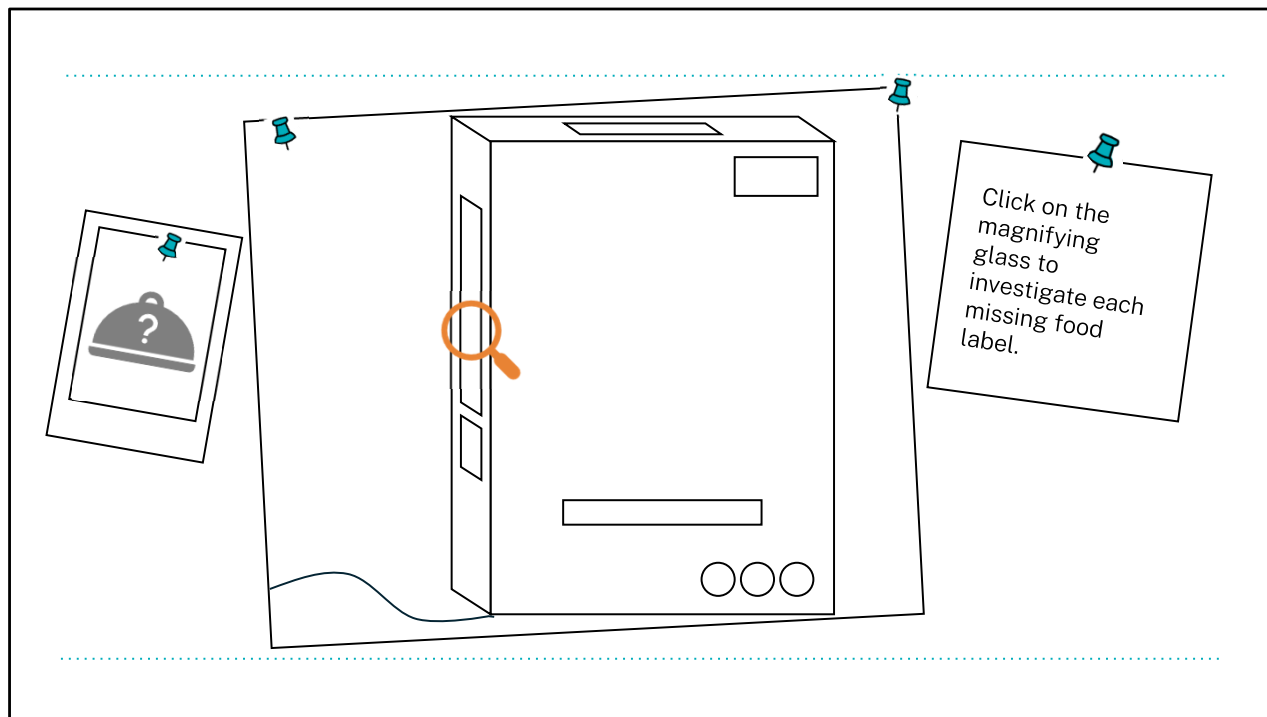
- Read through the conversation on the slide.
- **Ask:** What types of foods can we buy that do not come in a package?
- **Answers:** Fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, bulk food items
- Only a small list of foods do not have food labels. Otherwise, most foods are packaged and must be labeled with specific information.

Reference:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Food labelling requirement checklist. 2025 Jan 15. Available at: <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-labels/labelling/industry/requirements-checklist>



Speaker Notes:

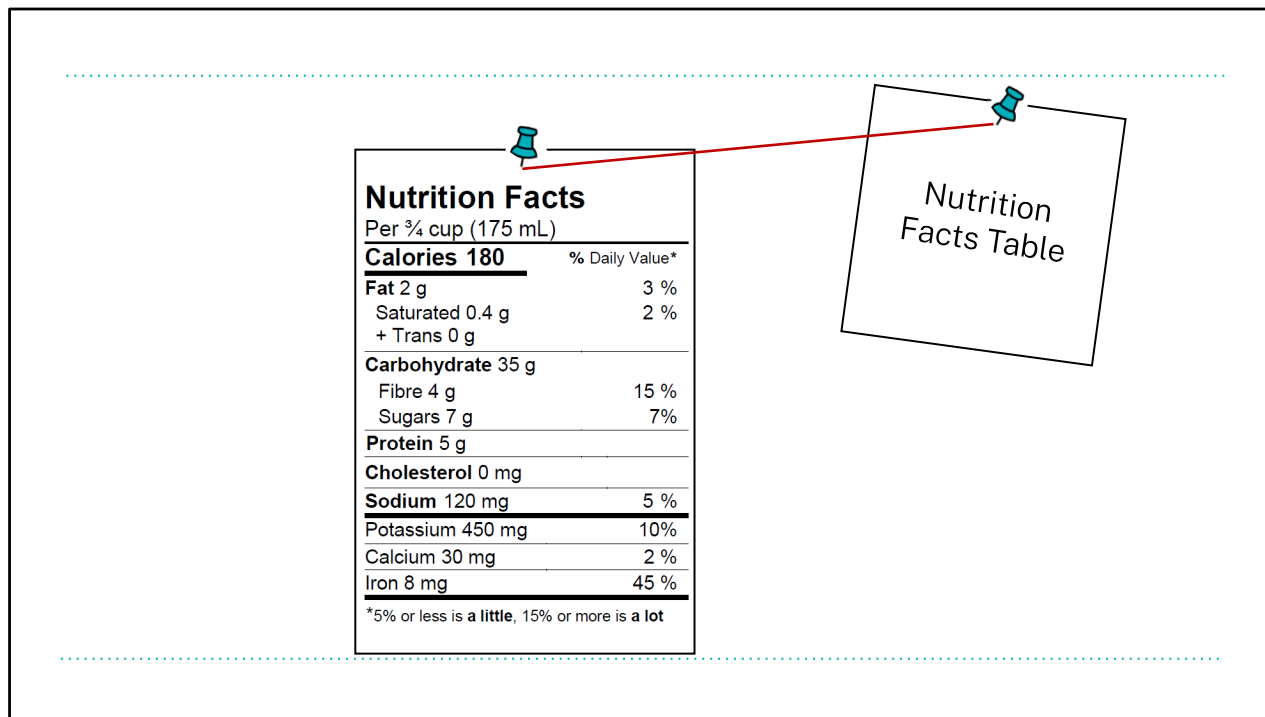


Speaker Notes:

- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has guidelines and requirements for food labels. We are going to take a look at some parts of a food label.

Reference:

Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Food labelling requirement checklist. 2025 Jan 15. Available at: <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-labels/labelling/industry/requirements-checklist>



Speaker Notes:

Most food packages are required to have a Nutrition Facts Table

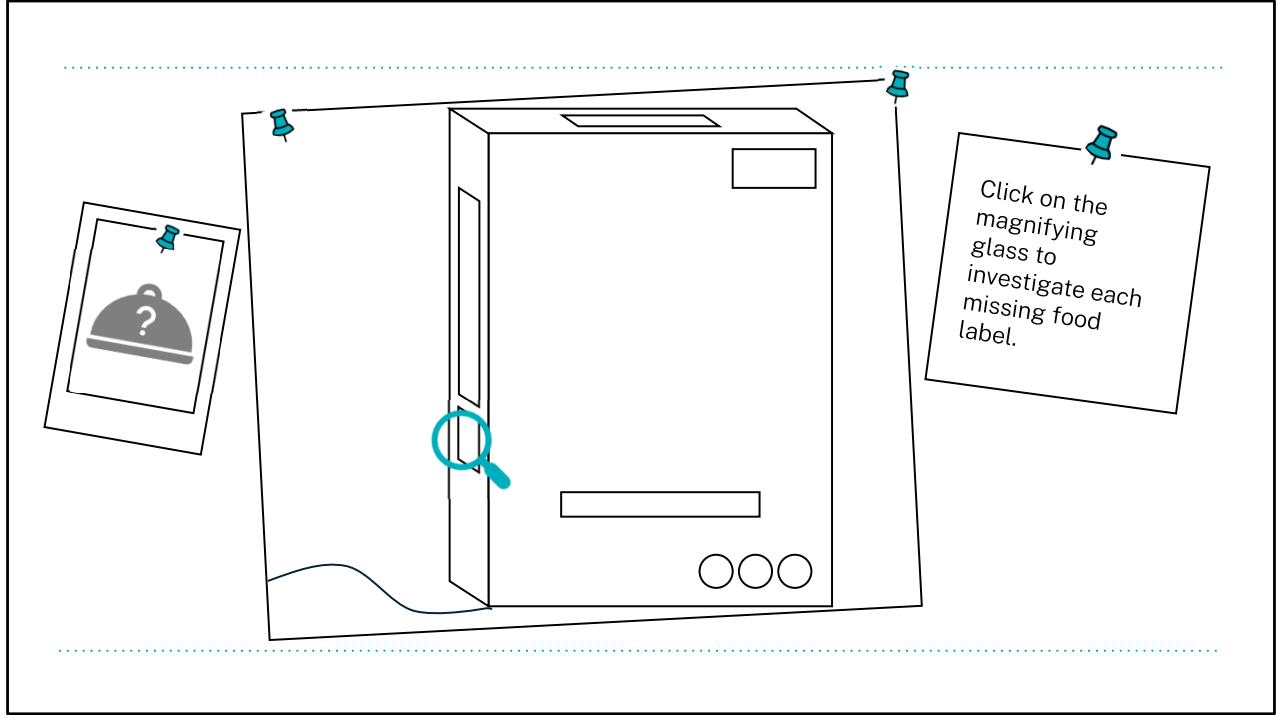
Nutrition Facts Table:

- The Nutrition Facts Table shows us the types and amounts of nutrients we will get from the food or drink.
- There are 12 nutrients that must be listed, but not all these nutrients will be in each food or drink.

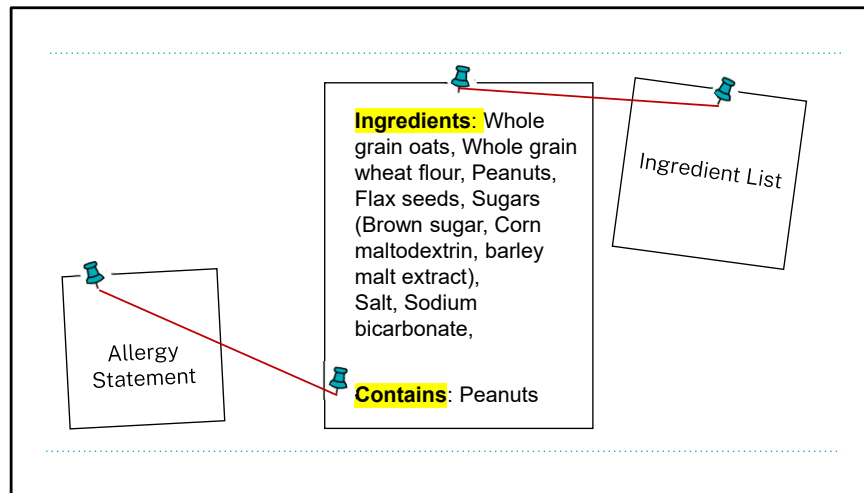
References:

Health Canada. Nutrition Labeling: Nutrition Facts Table. 2024 September 5.

Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/nutrition-labelling/nutrition-facts-tables.html>



Speaker Notes:



Speaker Notes:

Most packaged foods in Canada that have more than 1 ingredient need to include an ingredient list.

Ingredient List:

- The ingredient list shows us all the ingredients in the food item.
- It lists all the ingredients in order of weight. The list starts with the ingredient that weighs the most and ends with the ingredient that weighs the least.
- This means that the first few ingredients listed, likely make up most of the food item. For example, the ingredient list shown on the slide tells us that this food is mostly made from whole grain oats, whole grain wheat, and flax seeds.

Allergies and gluten-related illnesses

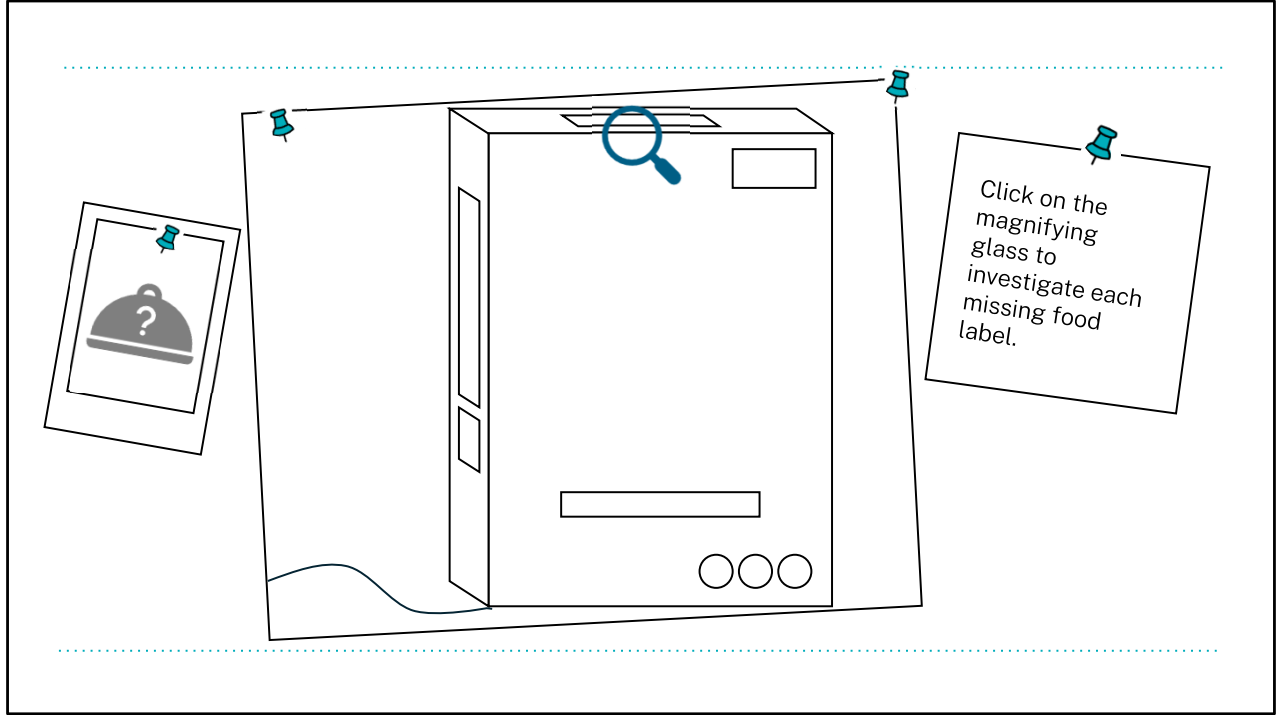
- For people that have allergies or cannot have gluten (found in wheat and foods made with wheat) need to look at food labels before purchasing or eating a food.
- In Canada, common allergens and gluten sources must always be clearly labeled on the food package.
- They will appear in the ingredient list or in an allergy statement located immediately after the ingredient list.

“Contains” Statements:

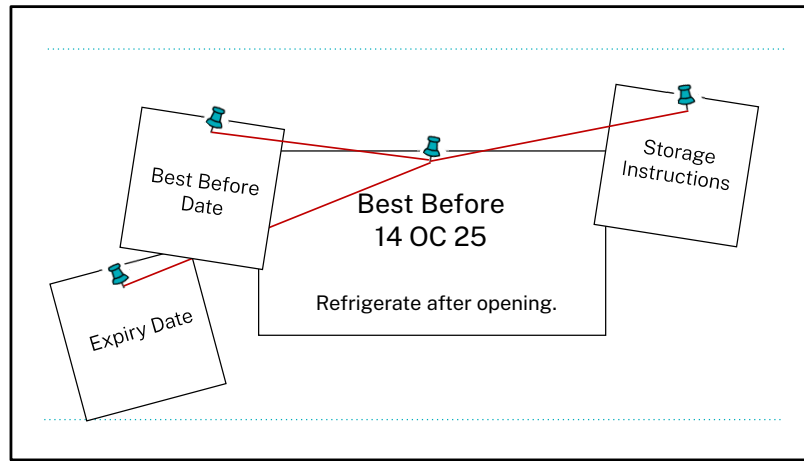
- Under the ingredient list, it will say “contains” in bold and list any ingredient in the food that may cause an allergic reaction or gluten, which can make some people sick.

References:

- Health Canada. Nutrition Labeling: List of Ingredients. 2024 July 4. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/nutrition-labelling/ingredient-list.html>
- Health Canada. Allergies and gluten sources labelling. 2024 Oct 2. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-allergies-intolerances/avoiding-allergens-food/allergen-labelling.html>
- Food Allergy Canada. Reading food labels. Unknown. Available from: <https://foodallergycanada.ca/living-with-allergies/day-to-day-management/reading-food-labels/>



Speaker Notes:



Speaker Notes:

Best Before Date:

- The best before date tells you how long an unopened food product will keep its freshness, taste and nutritional value (for example, the amount of vitamin C in juice may decrease after the best before date).
- It must be on all packaged foods that will last 90 days or less.
- The best before date is more about the quality and nutrition of a food, rather than food safety.
- You can buy and eat foods after the best before date has passed. However, there is a chance the food may have lost some of its freshness, flavour, and its texture may have changed.
- Most of the packaged foods we buy will have a best before date.

Expiry Date:

- The date a food will maintain its full nutrient amount.
- An expiry date is not used on most foods.
- The expiry date is found on very specific items like baby formula, nutritional supplements, meal replacements, etc.
- These items should not be bought, sold or eaten if the expiration date has passed.

Storage Instructions:

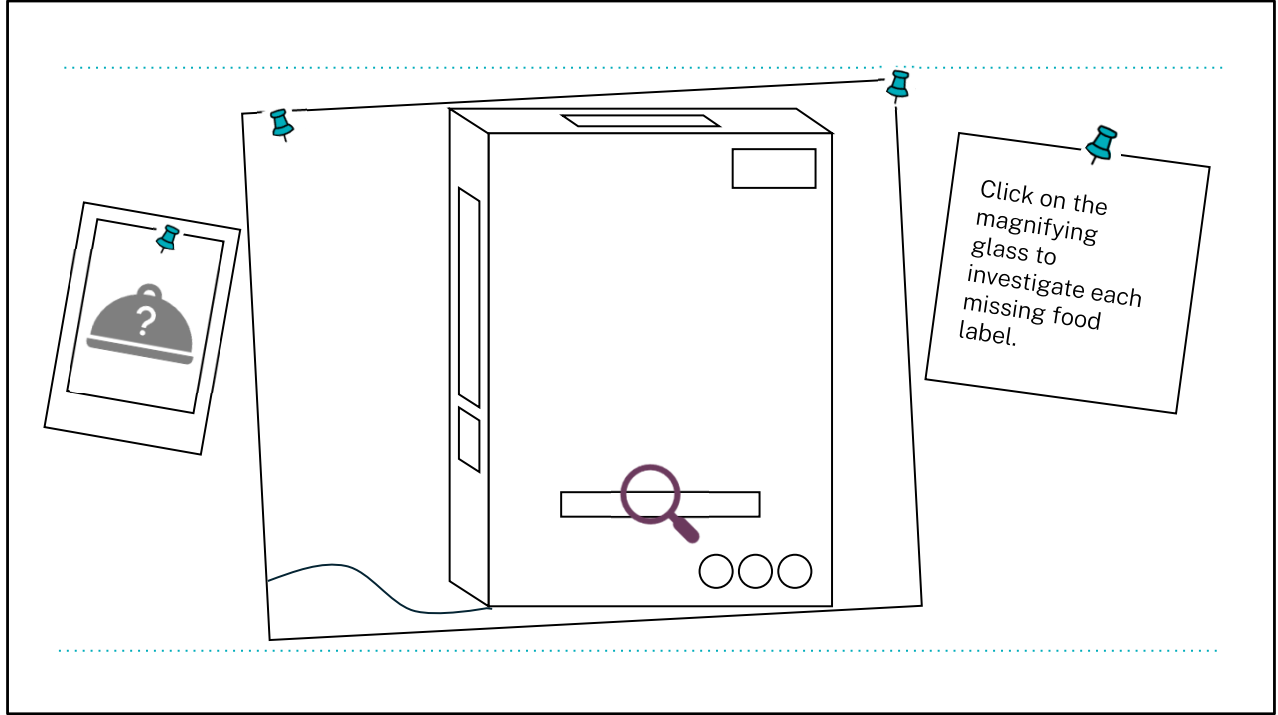
- Food packages have instructions telling us where to store our foods (fridge, freezer, dark or cool location) so that they stay fresh and food safe.
- Storing our food properly is one of the key things we can do to help protect ourselves from getting sick from food.
- Storing a food incorrectly can cause it to become unsafe to eat (e.g., grow mold), decrease its freshness, affect its flavor, and/or impact its texture.

Background information

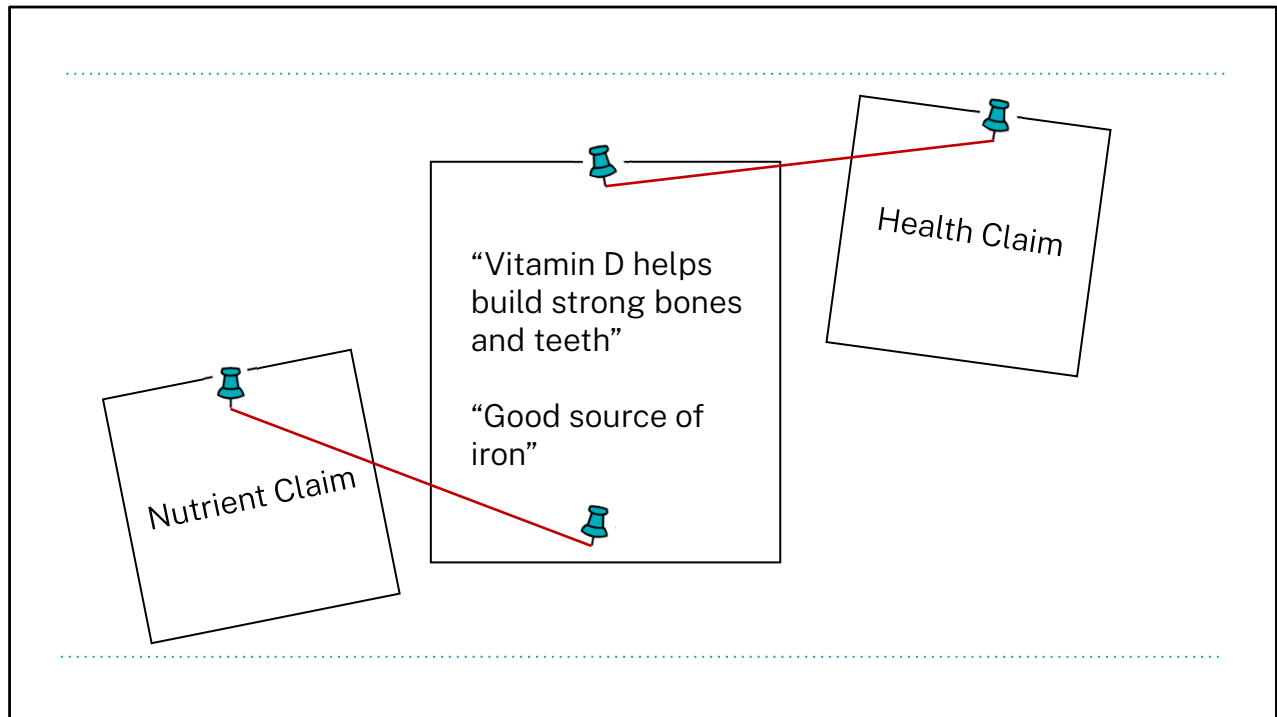
- Foods with a shelf life greater than 90 days do not need to be labelled with a best before date or storage information, as they are generally considered to be shelf stable. Examples include most canned foods, many dry foods such as rice or pasta, and frozen foods. However, some companies choose to provide customers with this information voluntarily.

References

- Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Understanding the date labels on your food. 2023 Aug 23. Available from: <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-labels/labelling/consumers/understanding-date-labels-your-food>



Speaker Notes:



Speaker Notes:

- Nutrition claims are optional statements on food labels that highlight specific nutrients, foods or ingredients. Nutrition claims are a way to draw attention to parts of the food that can contribute to well-being, which can make the products appear healthier.
- As mentioned before, highlighting the benefits of a food or ingredient is used in marketing to make the product more appealing to the shopper. There are two types of nutrition claims.

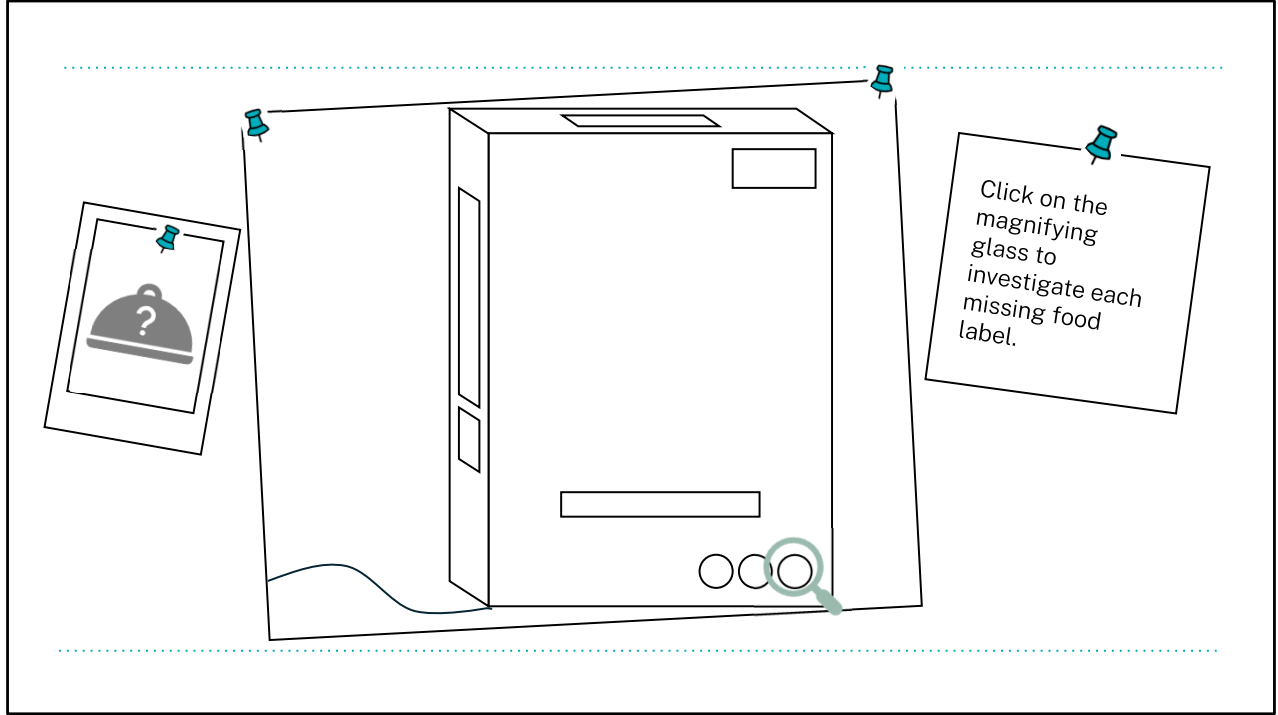
Nutrition Claims:

1. Nutrient Claim: describes the amount of a specific nutrient in the food product. A company may highlight a nutrient that our body needs or has health benefits. For example, "good source of iron", means this food is higher in iron, which is something our body needs. A food must have a specific amount of the nutrient for the company to be allowed to include one of these claims on the label.
2. Health Claim: describes the potential health effects of a food product. For example, "Vitamin D helps build strong bones and teeth".

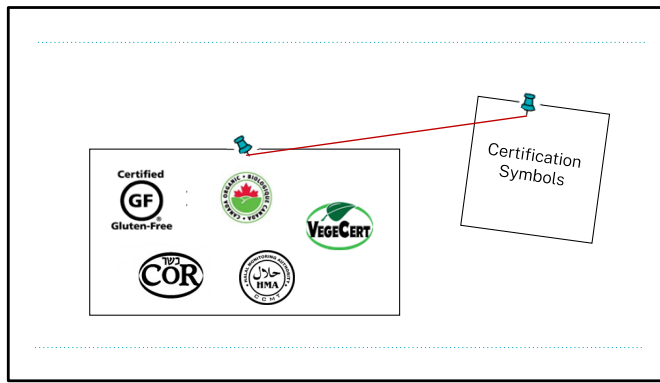
Nutrition claims must be accurate, truthful and there are specific rules companies need to follow. However, these claims only highlight one part of the food, so shoppers still need to look at other parts of the food label to find out more about the food item.

References:

Health Canada. Nutrition Labeling: Nutrition Claims. 2024 Dec 20. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/nutrition-labelling/nutrition-claims.html>



Speaker Notes:



Speaker Notes:

Certification symbols: can tell a shopper if a food is safe or aligns with their beliefs and values. Certification means that another organization that did not make the food has investigated all aspects of that food item (ingredients, production, etc.) and confirms that the food has met the necessary rules or standards.

Certified Gluten Free (GF)- tells us that there is no gluten (a type of protein in wheat) in the food and it is safe to eat for individuals with celiac disease.

Certified Organic –Means that the food or ingredients have been grown in a way that meets the requirements of the Canada Organic Standards.

Vege Cert or Vegan Cert Certified vegetarian symbol tells us that the food does not contain meat (beef, elk, pork, lamb), poultry (chicken, turkey), fish, seafood. It could have eggs and dairy foods. The word “**vegan**” is added to the symbol if the food does not contain any animal products (including no dairy, eggs, honey, etc.)

Certified Kosher (COR) – Tells us that the ingredients and the way the food is prepared (e.g. the way an animal is slaughtered) meets the Jewish food laws (rules).

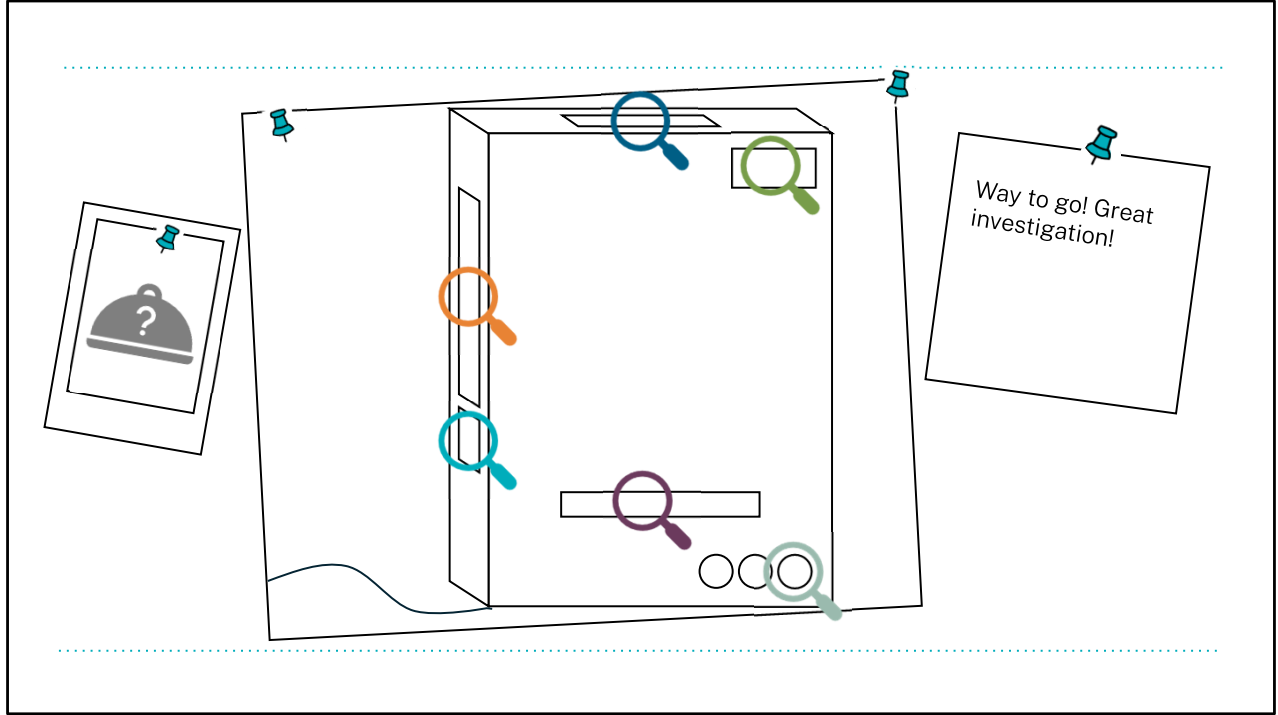
Certified Halal (HMA)- Tells us that the ingredients and the way the food is prepared meets the Islamic food laws (rules).

Background information:

- Kosher: means that the foods do not contain meat from unpermitted animals (e.g. pigs, rabbits, insects, shellfish), meat from permitted animals were slaughtered in a specific manner, dairy and meat products are not mixed, and certain products must be prepared by Jewish producers (e.g. cheeses, wines).
- Halal: means that the foods that do not contain meat from unpermitted animals (e.g. pigs, carnivores, insects, birds of prey, reptiles, rodents, domesticated donkeys, etc.), meat from permitted animals were slaughtered in a specific manner, products do not contain alcohol.

References (content and images)

- Canadian Celiac Association. What is global standard gluten free? 2025. Available from: www.celiac.ca/living-gluten-free/global-standard-gluten-free/
- Health Canada. Regulating organic products in Canada. 2024 Oct 11. Available from: <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/food-labels/organic-products/regulating>
- The Kashruth Council of Canada. What is Kosher? 2021. Available from: <https://cor.ca/kosher-certification/what-is-kosher/>
- Halal Monitoring Association Canada. What is Halal? 2025. Available at: <https://hmacanada.org/what-is-halal/>
- VegeCert. A symbol of trust. No date. Available from: <https://vegecert.com/about-us/>



Speaker Notes:

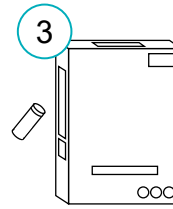
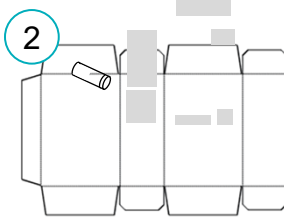
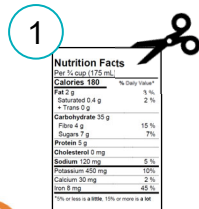
Build-A-Cereal Box Activity

Now that we know more about food labels, let's create a model to investigate further!



Sarah

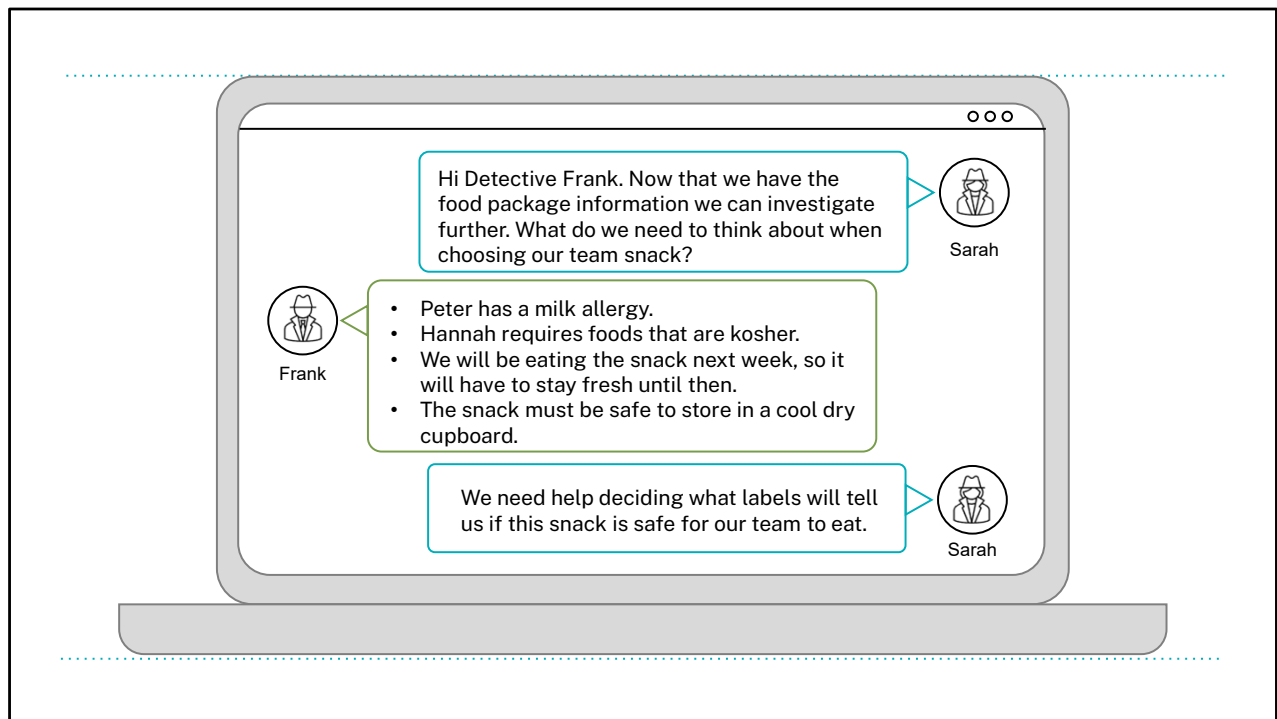
1. Cut out the box template and labels on your worksheet.
2. Glue each label where it belongs on the box.
3. Fold on the dotted lines of the box template and glue together.



Bonus: Find and circle the food marketing strategies used on the snack box.

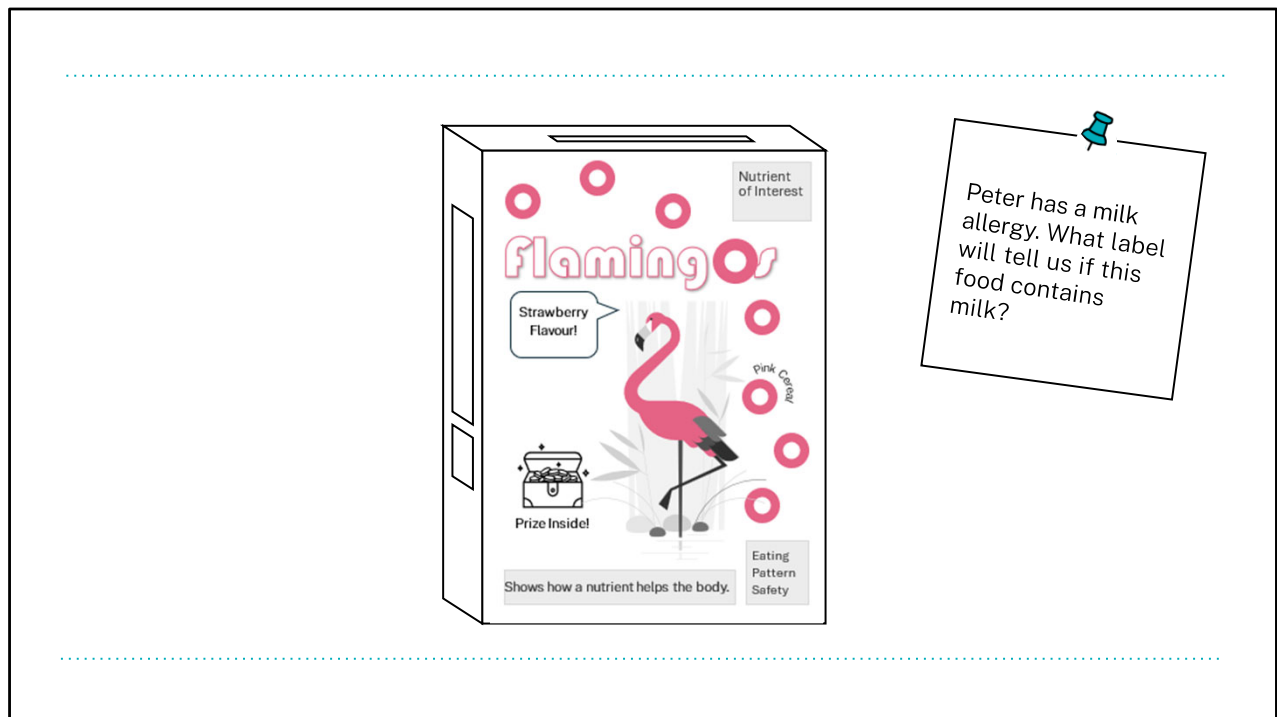
Speaker Notes:

Optional Activity: Distribute Build-A-Cereal-Box worksheet to each student. Provide 20-30 minutes for students to cut out template and labels, match labels to their appropriate location on the box, then glue together. While waiting for other students to finish, have students circle the food marketing strategies they can find on the box.



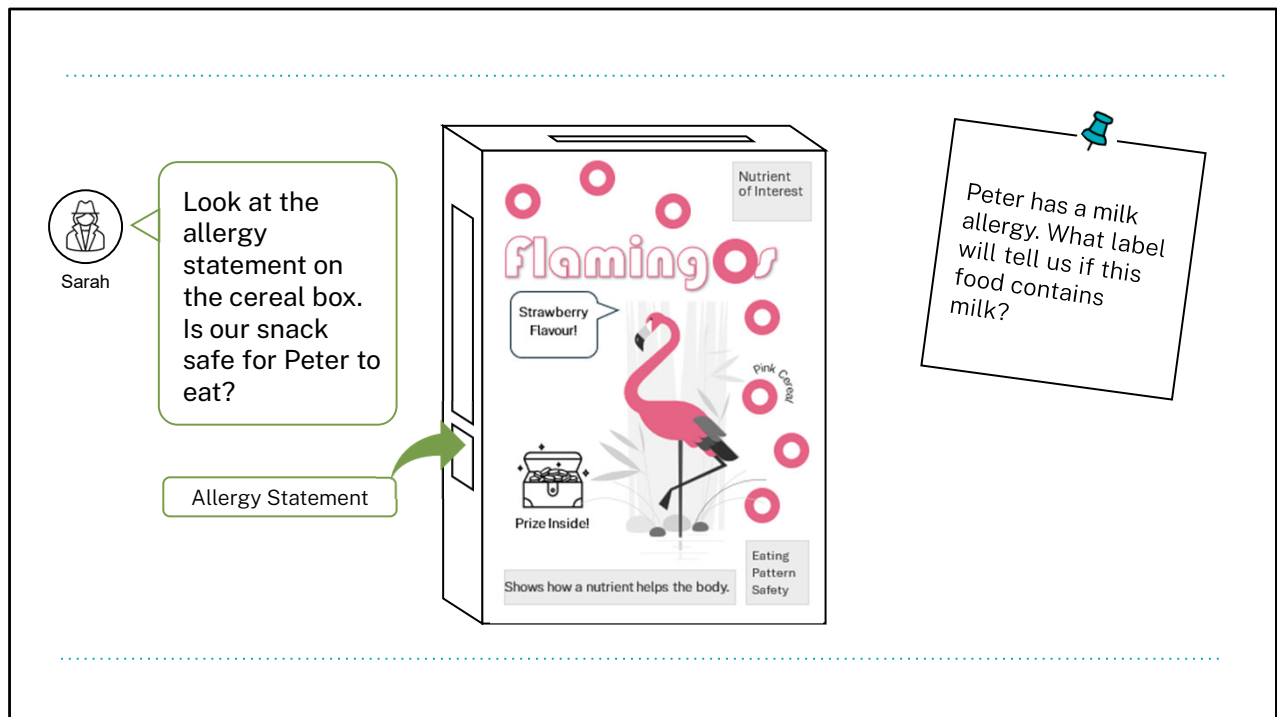
Speaker Notes:

Click and read through conversation.



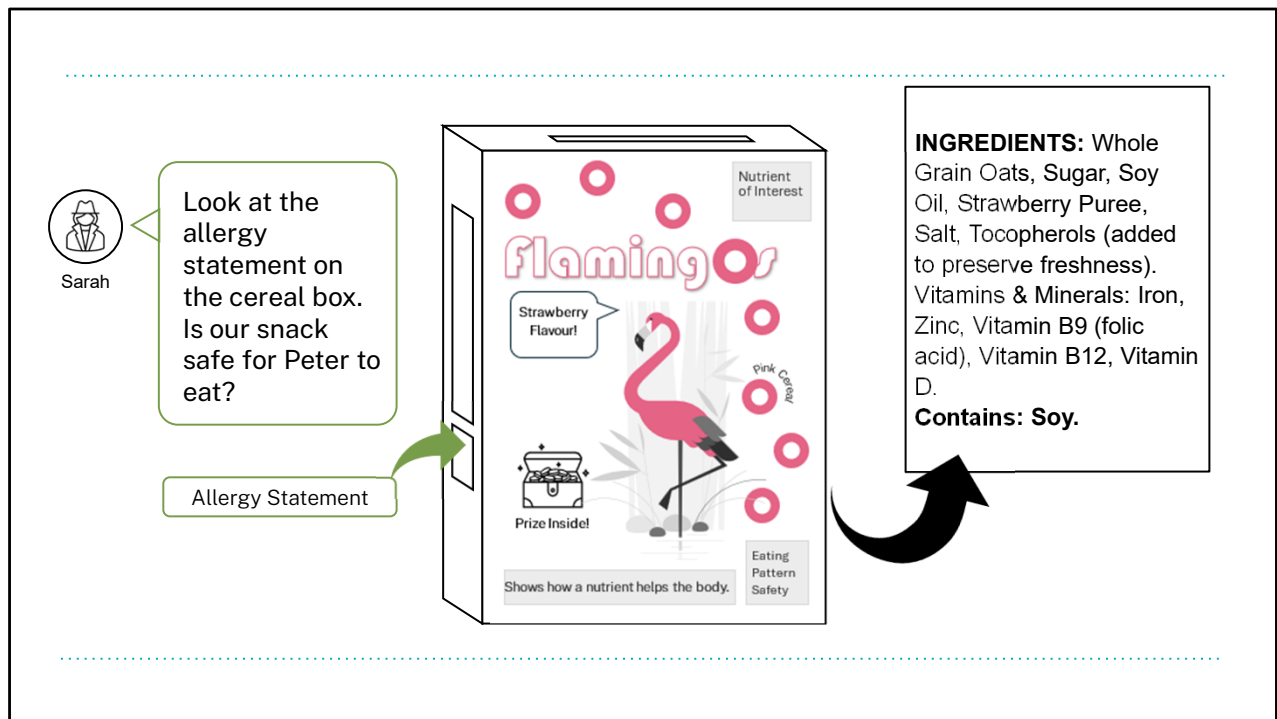
Speaker Notes:

- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify if the product contains milk.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: No milk is listed in the allergy statement. This product is safe for Peter to eat.



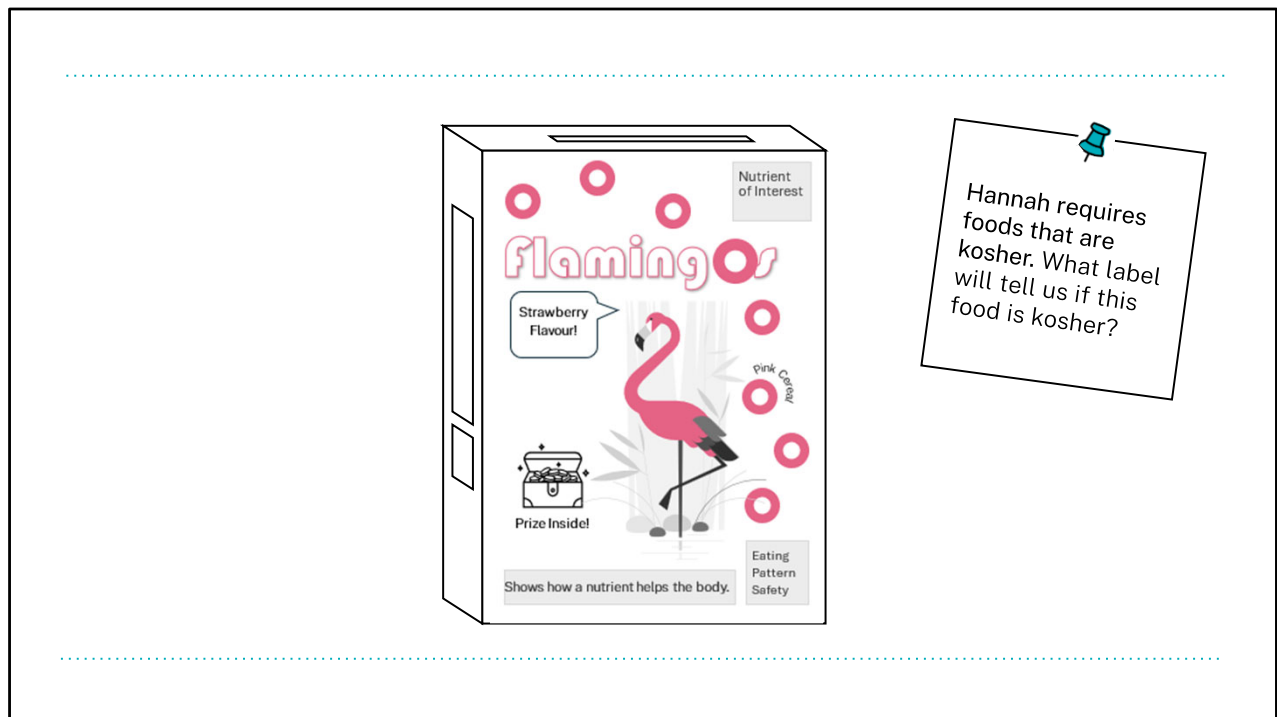
Speaker Notes:

- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify if the product contains milk.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: No milk is listed in the allergy statement. This product is safe for Peter to eat.



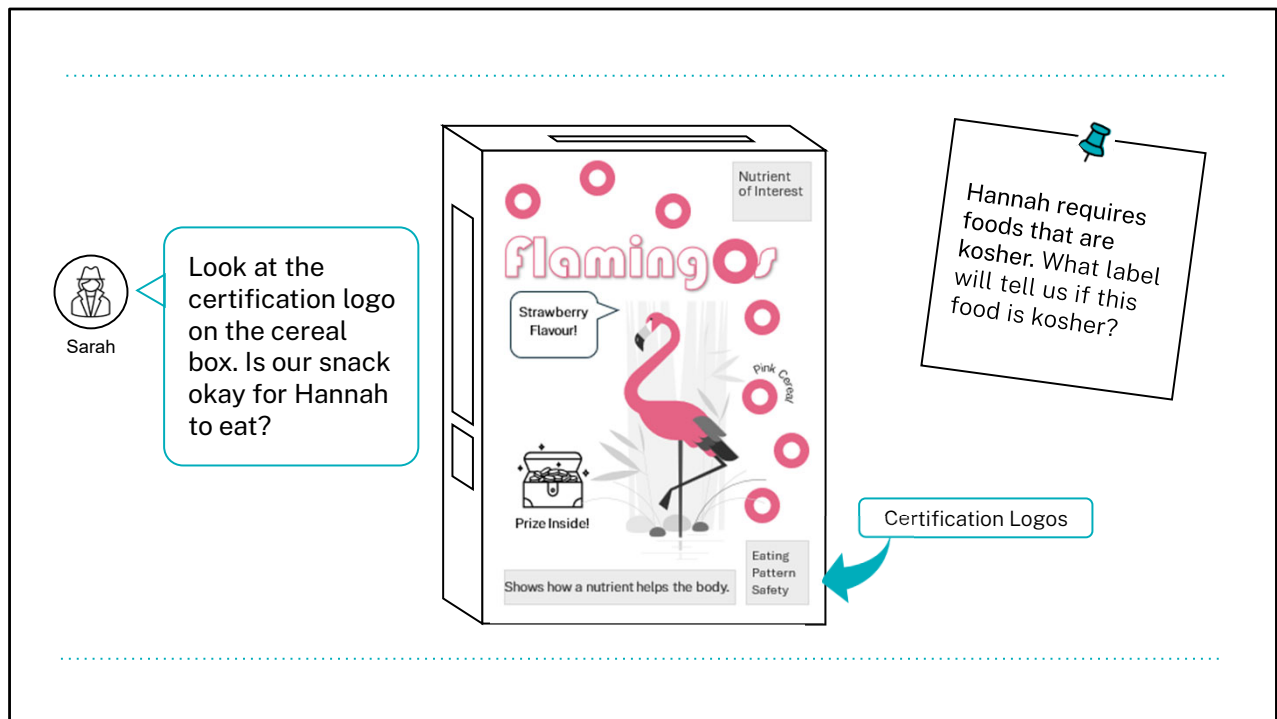
Speaker Notes:

- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify if the product contains milk.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: No milk is listed in the allergy statement. This product is safe for Peter to eat.



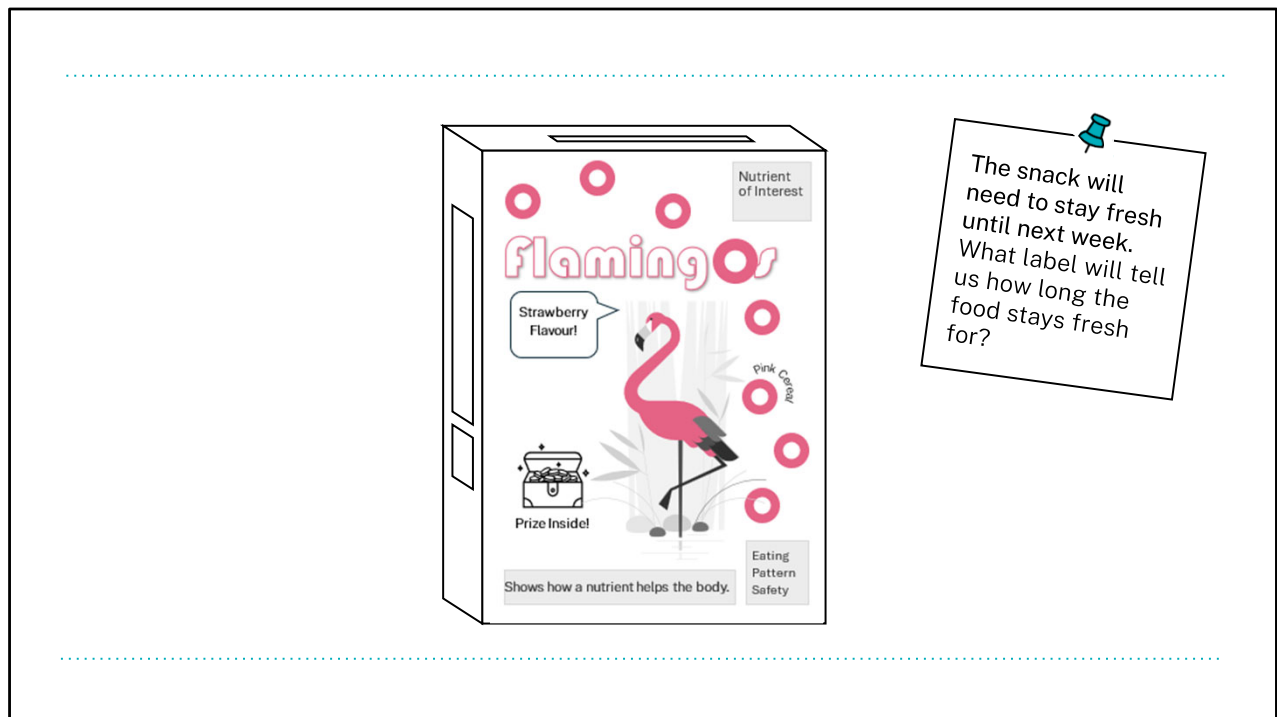
Speaker Notes:

- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify if the product is kosher.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, the product has a Kosher certification label. This product is okay for Hannah to eat.



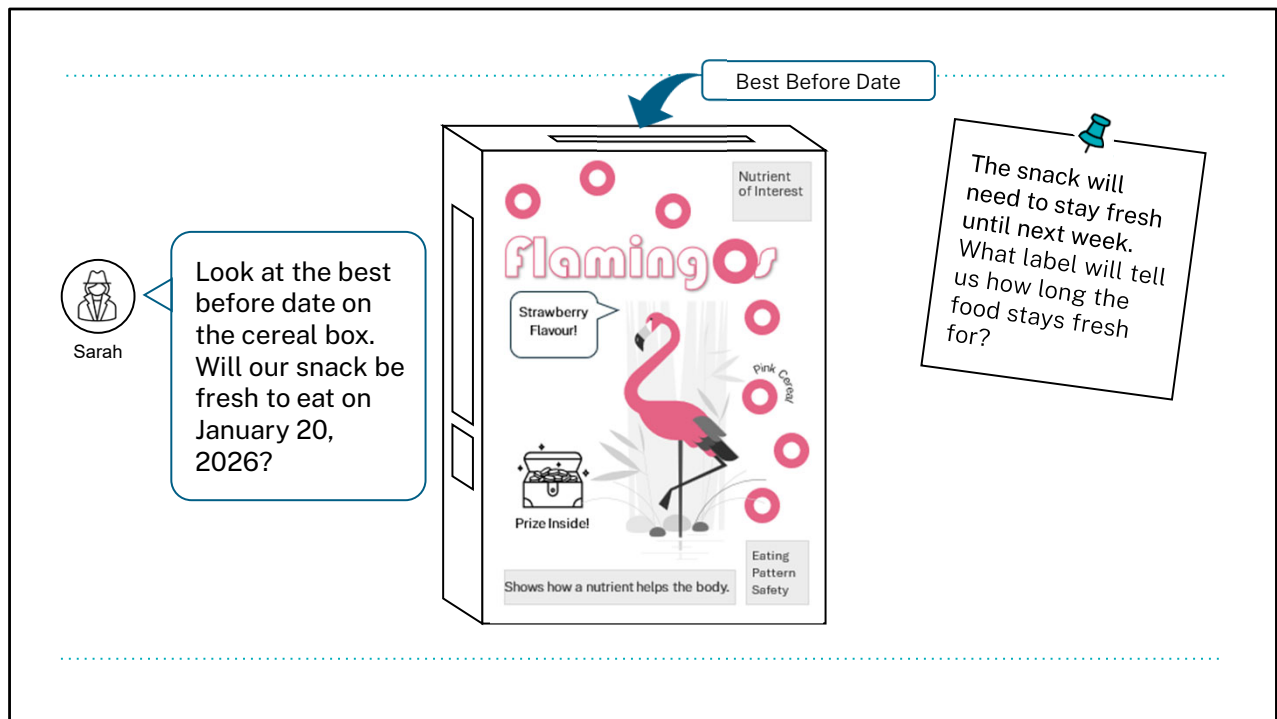
Speaker Notes:

- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify if the product is kosher.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, the product has a Kosher certification label. This product is okay for Hannah to eat.



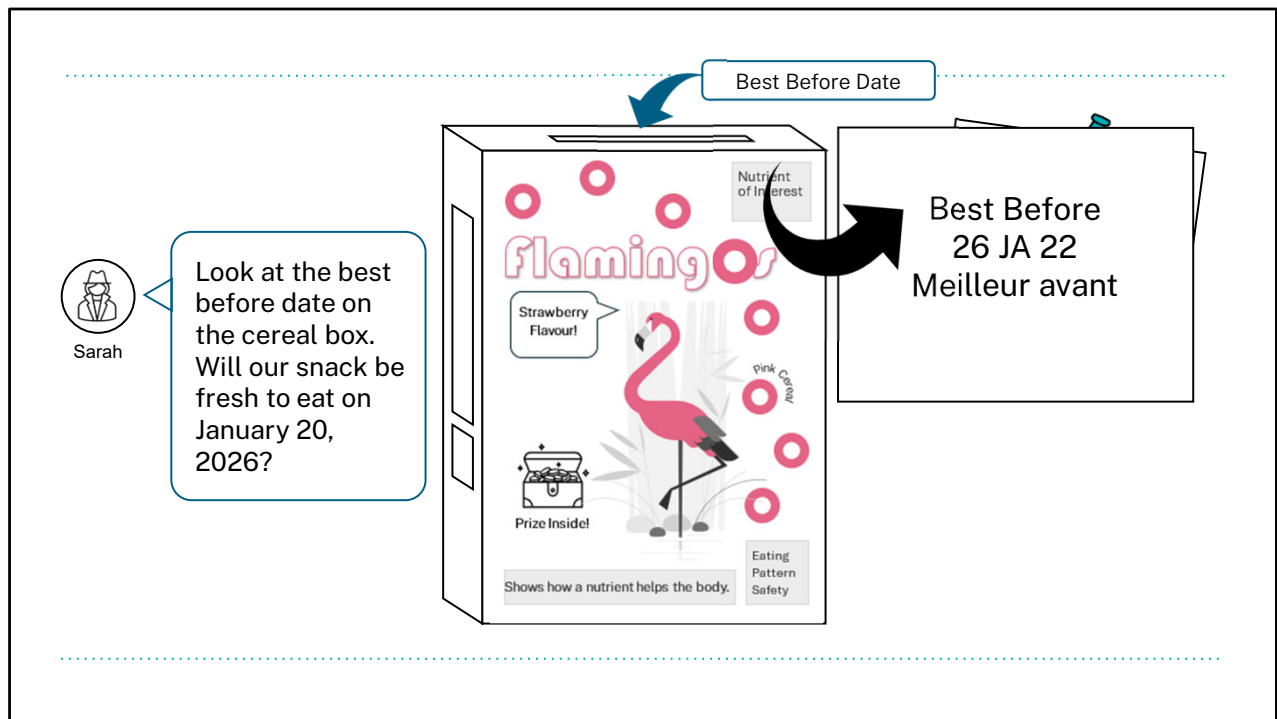
Speaker Notes:

- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify the best before date.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, this product will be fresh to eat.



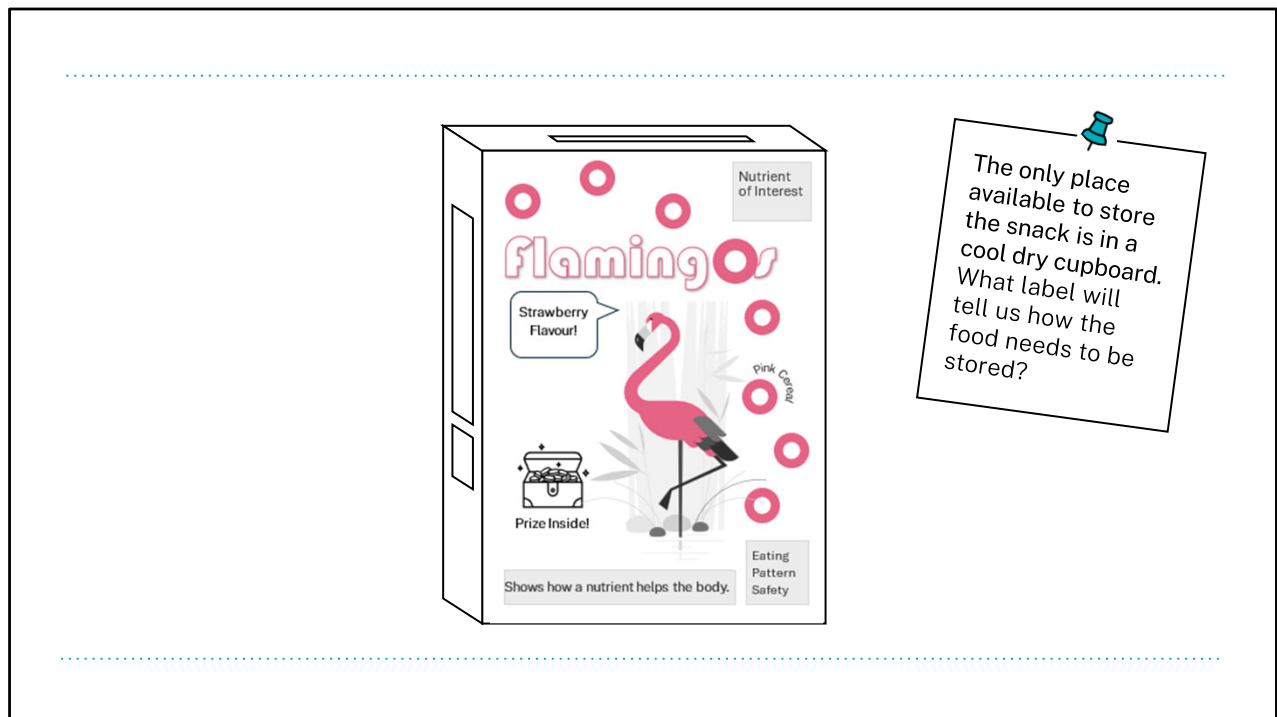
Speaker Notes:

- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify the best before date.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, this product will be fresh to eat.



Speaker Notes:

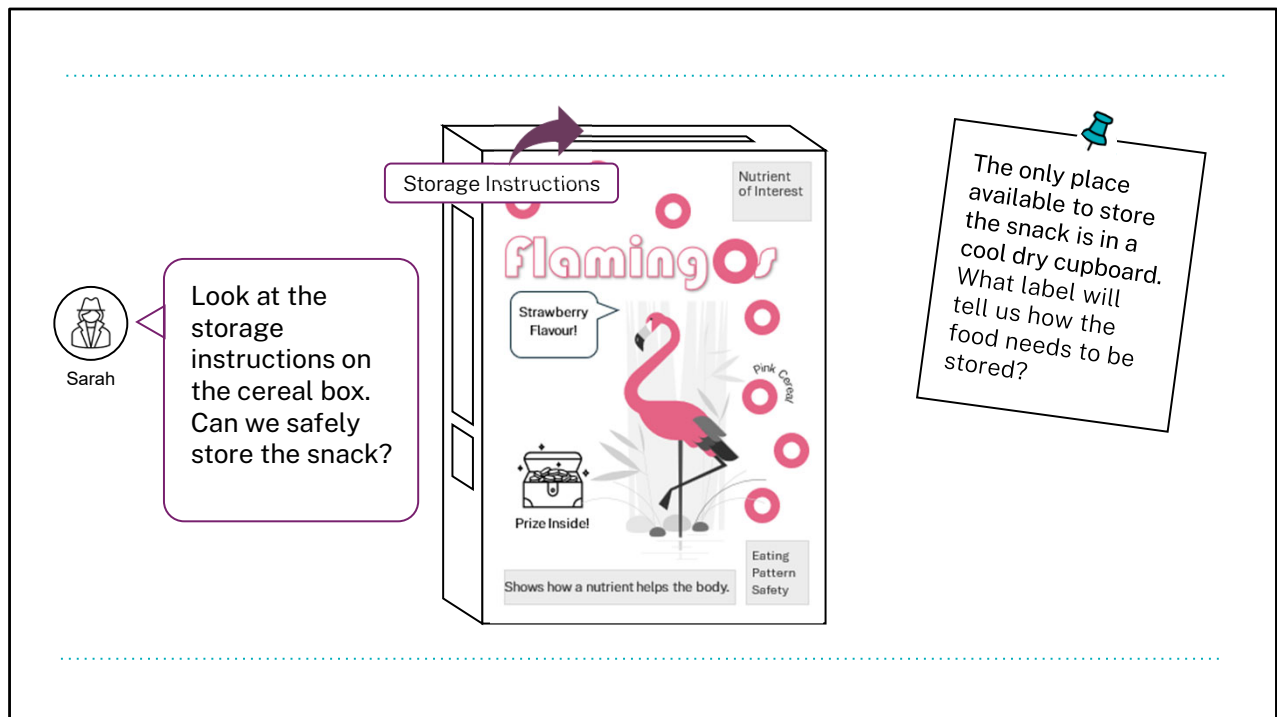
- Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify the best before date.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, this product will be fresh to eat.



Speaker Notes:

Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.

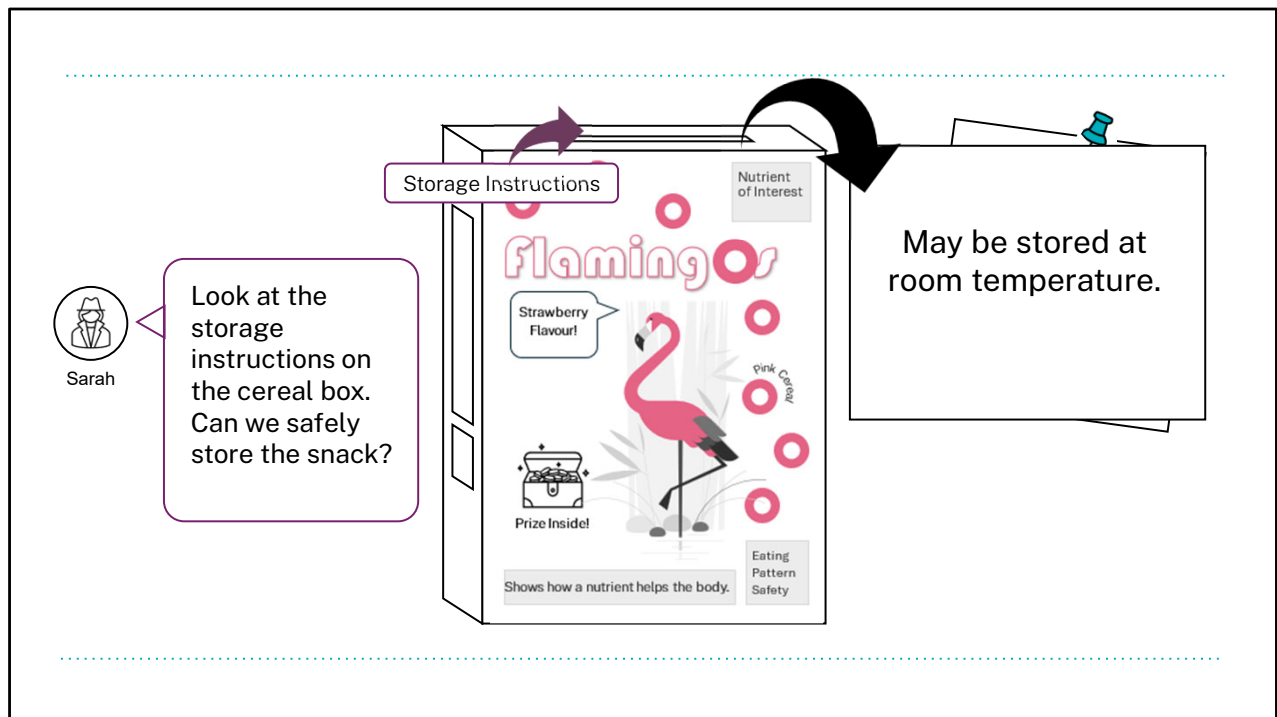
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify how to safely store this snack.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, the product can safely be stored in the cupboard.



Speaker Notes:

Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.

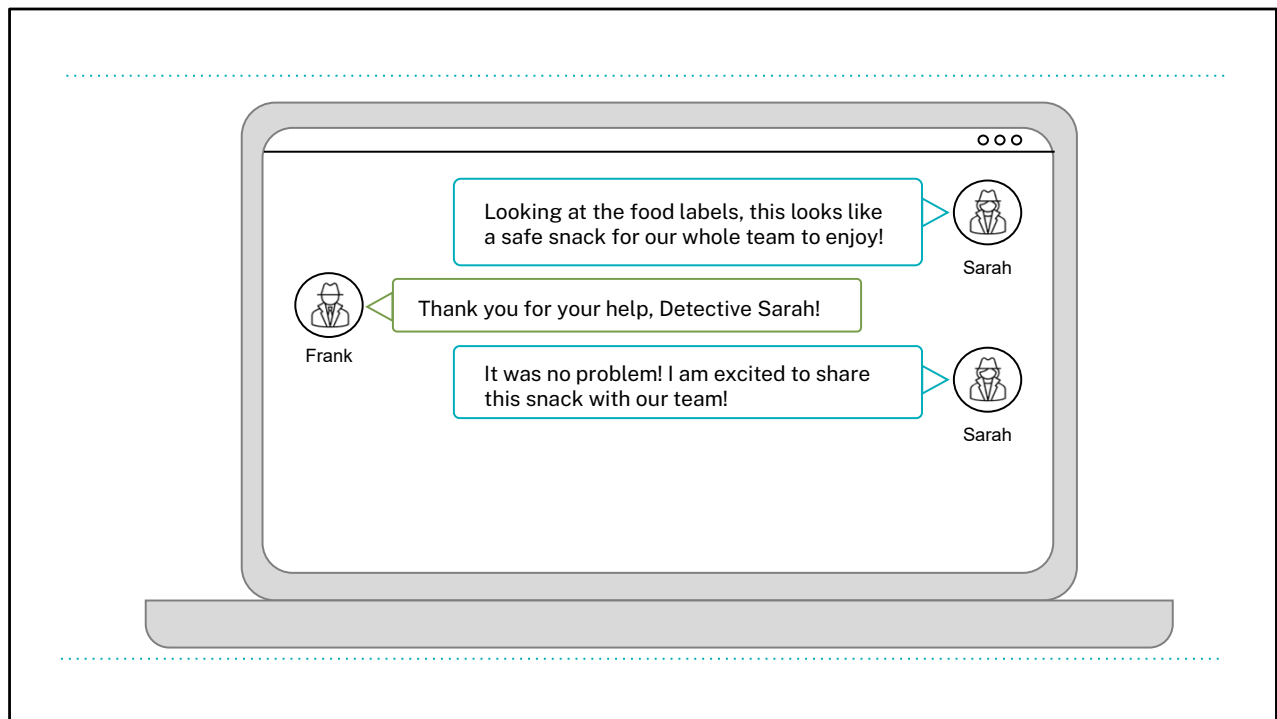
- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify how to safely store this snack.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, the product can safely be stored in the cupboard.



Speaker Notes:

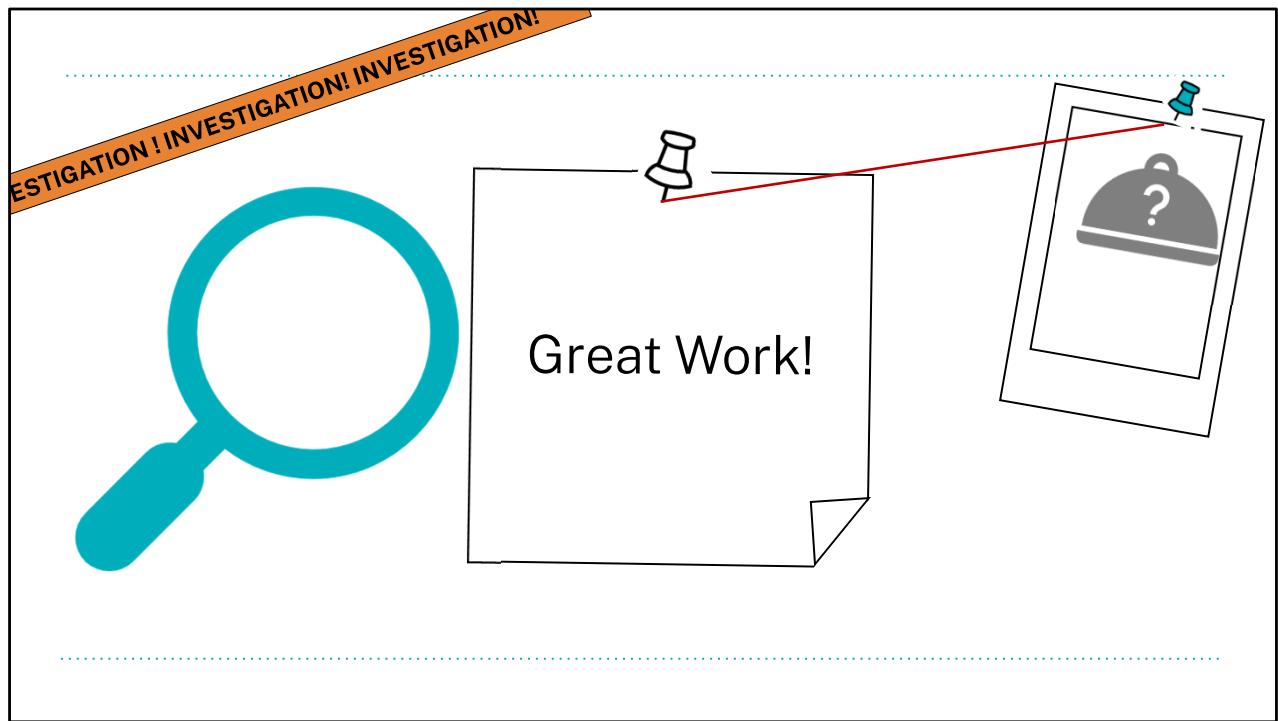
Read question to class. Click to reveal answer.

- Click again to reveal follow up question. Have students look on the cereal box model they created to identify how to safely store this snack.
- Click again to reveal label. Discuss answer.
- Answer: Yes, the product can safely be stored in the cupboard.



Speaker Notes:

Click and read through conversation.



Speaker Notes:

We now know more about food labels and the type of information and symbols that are on packaged foods. Food labels can be helpful in telling us what is in the food and how it was made.