

Nutrition Facts Labels

One of the most important guidelines for wise food shopping is to read food labels carefully. Most food labels provide a list of ingredients, and many also give additional information about the nutritional value of the contents.

The items listed often include:

Calories, fat, cholesterol, sodium, protein, fiber, vitamins and minerals, portion size

Ingredients

When looking at any list of ingredients, remember that ingredients are in order of their weight. The first ingredient is the one that makes up the greatest part of the product. The last ingredient on the list represents the smallest part of the product, and the others represent amounts in between.

Nutrition Facts

Food labels provide nutritional information for a single serving rather than for the entire package or can, unless, of course, that makes up one serving. Food labels also show the amount of certain nutrients per serving along with the “% Daily Value” (DV). The DV is based on a 2,000-calorie diet and is the percentage of each nutrient believed to meet the needs of the average person each day. For example, if a certain food provides 50 percent of the DV for Vitamin C, one serving gives a person half the Vitamin C needed per day.

A Little Reading Yields Big Benefits

The little bit of time that a person spends reading labels at the supermarket can give tremendous health benefits. Compare brand names to find the highest nutritional

value at a reasonable cost. If a favorite food doesn't have nutritional information on the label, write to the manufacturer and ask for a list of nutrients. Finally, don't forget to read the lists of nutrients that may be posted near fresh, unprocessed foods, such as in the butcher and produce sections of many supermarkets. You'll soon become an expert at filling your nutritional needs.

Labels may also list certain “health claims” that link disease prevention with certain dietary changes. Some examples include calcium and osteoporosis, fat and cancer, sodium and hypertension. For more information visit www.fda.gov

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)			
Servings Per Container About 8			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 230	Calories from Fat 40		
% Daily Value*			
Total Fat 8g			12%
Saturated Fat 1g			5%
Trans Fat 0g			
Cholesterol 0mg			0%
Sodium 160mg			7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g			12%
Dietary Fiber 4g			16%
Sugars 1g			
Protein 3g			
Vitamin A			10%
Vitamin C			8%
Calcium			20%
Iron			45%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.			
	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g



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Tips for Reading Labels

Check out the serving size

The serving size is an important measurement, since not all people eat the same amount of food at a single sitting.

Compare calories

Many people who are trying to manage their weight will only look at calories on the label. It is important to compare the calorie content of foods. Sometimes there is benefit to choosing one with fewer calories however, a higher calorie food with more nutrients may be a better choice. Generally, 40 Calories is low, 100 Calories is moderate, and 400 Calories or more is high.

Fats

A diet high in fat, especially saturated fats, can lead to increased risk of heart disease.

Choose foods that have 30% or less calories from fat. (Divide fat calories by total calories; the number should be less than 0.3) Choose foods that are low in saturated and trans fats. Cholesterol intake should be below 200 mg a day.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are listed as grams total, grams of sugar, and grams as dietary fiber. Sugars can be misleading as many foods are naturally high in sugar (fruits and milk products). Check the ingredient list to best determine if a food is high in sugar. If a sugar is one of the first three ingredients, the food may be considered to have a lot of sugar. Words that mean sugar include sucrose and high fructose corn syrup. Dietary Fiber is very important in the diet. Adults need 25-30 grams of fiber a day while kids needs their age plus 5 grams.

Vitamins/Minerals

Vitamins and minerals are listed as percent daily value based on a 2000 calorie per day diet. If the percent is above 10%, the food is considered a "good" source of a particular

nutrient. If it is above 20% it is considered to be an excellent source of the nutrient.

Sodium

It is recommended that sodium intake be kept < 2300 mg a day.

Fat Free

Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.

Low Fat

Three grams of fat or less per serving.

Reduced Fat

Used to describe a food that has the fat reduced by at least 25% as compared with a standard serving of the traditional food.

Lite/Light

1/3 fewer calories or 50% less fat as compared with a standard serving size of the traditional food. The term "light" still can be used to describe such properties as texture and color, as long as the label explains the intent--for example, "light brown sugar" and "light and fluffy."

Cholesterol Free

Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams (or less) of saturated fat per serving.

Reduced Calorie

Altered food contains at least 25 percent less calories than the regular product.

More

This term means that a serving of food, whether altered or not, contains a nutrient that is at least 10 percent of the Daily Value more than the reference food. The 10 percent of Daily Value also applies to "fortified," "enriched", "added", "extra" and "plus" claims, but in those cases, the food must be altered.



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