

Food Labels 101

Lesson Six

You're grocery shopping ---and you're bombarded with choices. Which type of cheese has the least amount of fat? Which type of cereal is a good source of fiber? What's the difference between skim and whole milk? Which fruit has more vitamin C, canned applesauce or peaches? You'll find the answers on the Nutrition Facts Food Label. Labels tell a lot about food. They don't suggest what foods to eat—that's your decision. But labels can help you make your "personal best" food choices—choices that benefit you as you pursue your fitness goals.

Discover how any food - including your favorites - can fit into a healthful diet in sensible amounts. Maximize your trips to the grocery store by using labels to make healthy food choices.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	Serving Size: 1 cup (228g) Servings Per Container: 2
Calories	Amount Per Serving Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110
	% Daily Value*
Nutrients to limit	Total Fat 12g 18%
	Saturated Fat 3g 15%
	Cholesterol 30mg 10%
	Sodium 470mg 20%
Carbohydrates	Total Carbohydrate 31g 10%
	Sugars 5g
Sugars & Protein	Protein 5g
	Dietary Fiber 0g 0%
Nutrients to increase	Vitamin A 4%
	Vitamin C 2%
	Calcium 20%
	Iron 4%
Percent Daily Values	*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:
	Calories 2,000 2,500
Footnote	Total Fat Less Than 65g 80g
	Saturated Fat Less Than 20g 25g
	Cholesterol 1 300g 300g
	Sodium 1 2,400mg 2,400mg
	Total Carbohydrate 300g 375g
Dietary Fiber 25g 30g	

Quick Guide to % DV

5% or Less is LOW

20% or More is HIGH

Serving sizes are standardized to make it easier to compare similar foods; they are provided in familiar units, such as cups or pieces. The size of the serving on the food package influences the number of calories and all the nutrient amounts listed on the top part of the label. Pay attention to the serving size, especially how many servings there are in the food package. Then ask yourself, "How many servings am I consuming?" In the sample label, one serving equals one cup. If you ate the whole package, you would eat two cups. That doubles the calories and other nutrient numbers, including the %Daily Values as shown in the sample label.

Check the Calories

The calorie section of the label can help you manage your weight (gain, lose or maintain.) The number of servings you consume determines the number of calories you actually eat. In the sample label, there are 250 calories in one serving. How many calories from fat are there in ONE serving? What if you ate the whole package?

Limit These Nutrients

The nutrients listed first are the ones we generally eat in adequate amounts, or even too much. Eating too much **saturated fat**, **trans fat**, **cholesterol**, or **sodium** may increase your risk of certain chronic diseases, like heart disease, some cancers, or high blood pressure. Important: Keep your intake of these nutrients as low as possible. Limit sodium to no more than 2400 mg a day, cholesterol to 300 mg and avoid foods that have more than 2 grams of saturated fat.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates include sugars, complex carbohydrates, and fiber. A quality carbohydrate should also have fiber and

Start with the Serving Size

The first place to start when you examine the food or nutrition label is the serving size and the number of servings in the package.

sugar. Try to avoid carbohydrates with zero fiber. A quality carbohydrate has at least 1/6 as fiber – For example; 20 grams of carbohydrate would have around 3 - 4 grams of fiber.

Sugars

Sugars include naturally occurring sugars such as fructose in fruit and lactose in dairy products as well as added sugars such as sucrose (table sugar). Nutritionally they are just simple carbohydrates that are just contributing empty calories.

Proteins

Most Americans get more protein than they need. Where there is animal protein, there is also fat and cholesterol. Eat small servings of lean meat, fish and poultry. Use skim or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese. Try vegetable proteins like beans, grains and cereals.

Nutrients to Increase

Most Americans don't get enough dietary **fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium,** and **iron** in their diets. Eating enough of these nutrients can improve your health and help reduce the risk of some diseases and conditions. For example, getting enough calcium may reduce the risk of osteoporosis. Eating a diet high in dietary fiber promotes healthy bowel function and promotes weight loss. Additionally, a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and grain products that contain dietary fiber, may reduce the risk of heart disease. Aim for 20 to 35 grams of fiber a day.

Footnotes

This part tells you the amount you should get of each nutrient if you take in 2,000 or 2,500 calories in one day. When the full footnote does appear, it will always be the

same. It doesn't change from product to product, because it shows recommended dietary advice for all Americans--it is not about a specific food product.

Daily Values

The % Daily Values (%DVs) is based on the Daily Value recommendations for key nutrients but only for a 2,000 calorie daily diet. Use the %DV as a frame of reference based around the calories you consume, even if they are more or less than 2,000 calories. Anything that is 5%DV or less is low for all nutrients, you want to limit these (fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium), and for those that you want to consume in greater amounts (fiber, calcium, potassium etc.) the label shows, 20%DV or more is high for all nutrients.

Example: Look at the amount of Total Fat in one serving listed on the sample label. Is 18% DV contributing a lot or a little to your fat limit of 100% DV? It is 18%DV, which is below 20%DV, not yet high, but what if you ate the whole package (two servings)? You would double that amount, eating 36% of your daily allowance for Total Fat. Coming from just one food, that amount leaves you with 64% of your fat allowance ($100\% - 36\% = 64\%$) for all of the other foods you eat that day, snacks and drinks included.

Check the Ingredients List

Ingredients are listed in descending order of predominance. This means that the first ingredient is the most prevalent in the product, while the last ingredient has the least amount in the product. The ingredient list can help you identify 'hidden' ingredients, like added sugars, trans-fats (hydrogenated oils), and coconut oil or palm oil, which are high in saturated fat.

Ingredient List *Red Flags*:

- Enriched anything. This has to be the biggest joke in the food industry. Enriched means the food was stripped of vital nutrients, and then a half-baked attempt at stuffing more back in was made.
- A protein where the fat calories are half of or more than the total calories (unless, of course, you are looking at a bottle of olive oil)
- A carbohydrate where sugars are half or more of the total grams of carbohydrates (ex. Carbohydrates 12g, sugars 6g.)
- Avoid partially hydrogenated oils (also known as trans-fatty acids) and hydrogenated oils (as opposed to partially hydrogenated).