

A Guide to Reading Food Labels

Reading food labels can help you make wise food choices. Most foods list nutrition information on the package label, called Nutrition Facts. This information helps you compare foods so you can purchase the healthier option.

1 Serving Size

2 Calories

3 Limit These Nutrients

4 Get Enough of These Nutrients

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving
Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110

| | % Daily Value* |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Total Fat 12g | 18% |
| Saturated Fat 3g | 15% |
| Trans Fat 3g | |
| Cholesterol 30mg | 10% |
| Sodium 470mg | 20% |
| Total Carbohydrate 31g | 10% |
| Dietary Fiber 0g | 0% |
| Sugars 5g | |
| Protein 5g | |
| Vitamin A | 4% |
| Vitamin C | 2% |
| Calcium | 20% |
| Iron | 4% |

* 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 |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| 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 |

5 Percent Daily Value

- 5% or Less is Low
- 20% or More is High

6 Understanding the Footnote

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

1 Serving Size

The serving size is a measured amount of food. In the sample label above, the serving size is one cup, and there are two servings per container. If you ate the whole package, you would eat two cups, which doubles the calories and other nutrient numbers. The serving on the food label may be smaller or larger than the serving size you normally eat. Be aware of the serving size and the number of servings you actually consume to be sure you are within your recommended daily calories.



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Amount Per Serving

Calories 250

Calories from Fat 110

2 Calories

The number of calories is the total amount of energy that the food provides.

Pay attention to calories. If you eat more calories than your body uses, over

time you will gain weight. Another important part of the label is the number of calories from fat. It's advised to limit the number of calories from fat to 30% of your total daily caloric intake. In the sample label, there are 250 calories in one serving and 110 calories from fat, which means almost 50% of the calories in a single serving come from fat. Because of its high fat content, this food is not a healthy choice. Choose foods with less than 30% of calories from fat.

Total Fat 12g

Saturated Fat 3g

Trans Fat 3g

Cholesterol 30mg

Sodium 470mg

3 Limit These Nutrients

The nutrients you should limit include saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

These are nutrients that Americans typically eat too much of, which can increase the risk for certain chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer or diabetes. Total fat is important to watch, but saturated fat and trans fat are particularly bad for you. They may raise your blood cholesterol level, which increases your risk of heart disease. Choose foods that contain less than 10% of calories from saturated fat.

About Trans Fat

Trans fat is a new addition to the Nutrition Facts. Trans fat is made when hydrogen is added to vegetable oil, a process called hydrogenation. Hydrogenation increases the shelf life and flavor of foods containing these fats. Unlike other fats, the majority of trans fat is formed when liquid oils are made into solid fats like shortening and hard margarine. If a food has the words "partially hydrogenated oil" in the ingredients, it contains trans fat. Avoid trans fat whenever possible.

Dietary Fiber 0g

Sugars 5g

Protein 5g

Vitamin A

Vitamin C

Calcium

Iron

4 Get Enough of These Nutrients

The nutrients you should get more of include fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron.

Getting enough of these nutrients can reduce your risk for certain cancers, osteoporosis or hypertension. It is recommended to consume 100% of each of these nutrients daily to prevent nutrition-related diseases.

| % Daily Value* | |
|----------------|-----|
| | 18% |
| | 15% |
| | 10% |
| | 20% |
| | 10% |
| | 0% |
| | |
| | |
| | 4% |
| | 2% |
| | 20% |
| | 4% |

5 Percent Daily Value

Understanding the Percent Daily Values (% DV) on a food label can help you choose foods that are high in good nutrients and low in bad nutrients.

The % DV is based on a 2,000 calorie daily diet. If you need less than 2000 calories a day, your daily value may be lower than what is listed on the label. If you eat more, your daily value may be higher. Remember that 5% DV or less is low and 20% DV or more is high.

So for fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, or sodium, choose foods with a low % DV.

6 Understanding the Footnote

The footnote refers to the Percent Daily Value. It states that the percentages are based on a 2,000 calorie diet, which does not change from product to product. This footnote also reminds consumers of the daily intake of different recommended nutrients depending on their caloric needs. If you consume less than 2,000 calories daily, your recommended daily intake of these nutrients is even lower.

* 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 |
|--------------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Total Fat | Less than | 65g | 80g |
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Source: FDA - U.S. Food and Drug Administration



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