

Why read the label?

It can tell you:

- How much food is in a serving
- How many calories are in a serving
- Recommended amounts of nutrients
- Whether a food fits into your healthy diet

When you shop, you can:

- Compare products to find good sources of healthy nutrients such as fiber, calcium, iron and vitamins A and C.
- Look for foods low in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, salt and sugars.
- Pay attention to calories if you're trying to lose or maintain weight.



"I use the label to manage my weight and get the nutrients I need to stay healthy."

What's on the label?

Serving Size tells you how much is in 1 serving and how many servings are in the container. Packages often have more than 1 serving. If you eat more than a serving, you'll be getting more calories, fat and sugar.

Calories tells you how many calories are in 1 serving and how many are from fat. If calories from fat are a high percent of the total calories, check the ingredients. Make sure the fat is from healthy sources, such as fish, nuts and olive or canola oils.

% Daily Value (DV) tells you what percent of the daily recommended amount is in 1 serving of the food. Fat, cholesterol and sodium (salt) should be eaten only in small amounts. Fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium and iron should be increased to eat healthy.

The % Daily Value is based on a 2000 calorie-a-day diet. A low Daily Value is 5% or less; 20% or more is high.

Total Fat tells you how much total fat, saturated fat and trans fat is in the food, and what percent of the daily recommended amount this is. Your body needs some fat to absorb vitamins, maintain cells and help the immune system work.

Saturated fat should only be eaten in small amounts—5% or less of the DV. Try to avoid trans fat.

Cholesterol tells you how much cholesterol is in the food and what % DV this is. High levels of cholesterol can lead to heart disease—20% or more of the DV is high.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 1/2 cup (114g)
Servings Per Container: 4

Amount Per Serving

Calories 90 Calories from Fat 30

% Daily Value*

Total Fat	3g	5%
Saturated Fat	0g	0%
Trans Fat	0g	
Cholesterol	0mg	0%
Sodium	300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate	11g	4%
Dietary Fiber	3g	12%
Sugars	3g	
Protein	3g	
Vitamin A		80%
Vitamin C		60%
Calcium		4%
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.

Sodium shows the salt content. Too much salt increases the risk of high blood pressure. Most Americans eat more salt than they need—20% or more of the DV is high.

Carbohydrates include fiber and sugars.

- Fiber is healthy. It can reduce the risk of heart disease and improve digestion.
- Sugars added to foods add calories, but no nutrients. A teaspoon of sugar equals 4 to 5 grams. There is no recommended daily amount for sugar.

A 12-ounce soft drink contains 130 calories and 8 teaspoons of sugar.

Protein isn't always listed. Most Americans get enough protein per day, but not always from healthy sources. When eating protein foods such as meat, beans, milk and milk products, choose lean, low-fat or fat-free options.

Vitamins A and C and the minerals calcium and iron are listed on the label. Other vitamins and minerals may be listed too, but aren't required. If you eat a fruit or vegetable at each meal or snack, you probably get enough of these nutrients.

Which nutrients and how much?

The nutrients on a food label are required to be listed by law. They address common health concerns. They're the same for all foods.

Limit these:

If the label shows that 1 serving has 5% or less of the Daily Value, the amount is low.

Saturated fat is found in animal products, such as red meat, poultry, butter and whole milk. It stays solid at room temperature. You should eat no more than 20 g of saturated fat per day.

Trans fat is found in crackers, cakes, cookies and fried foods. Eating zero trans fat is best. Foods with less than 0.5 grams of trans fat can claim to have 0 grams. But if the ingredients list includes hydrogenated oils, the food has some trans fat.

Eating several servings of foods with 0.5 grams of trans fat can quickly add up.

Cholesterol is found in animal products such as meat, fish, poultry, eggs and dairy foods. You should eat no more than 300 mg per day.

Sodium (salt) content can vary between similar packaged foods. In general, you should eat no more than 2300 mg, or 1 teaspoon, of salt per day. If you're at risk of high blood pressure, try to eat less than 1500 mg.

Get enough of these:

If the label shows that 1 serving has 20% or more of the Daily Value, the amount is high.

Fiber may prevent or relieve constipation. It can also lower your risk of diabetes and heart disease. Aim for at least 25 g per day. Whole-grain foods are a good source. Look for whole grains listed first in the ingredients.

Vitamin A helps keep teeth, skin and eyes healthy. Good sources include carrots, sweet potatoes and dark green, leafy vegetables.

Vitamin C is vital to repair and maintain skin, bones, teeth and blood vessels. The body doesn't make vitamin C on its own, so you have to get it in your diet. Good sources include citrus fruits, green peppers, broccoli and cantaloupe.

Calcium helps build and maintain healthy bones. It also helps blood clot and keeps nerves and muscles working well. Aim for at least 1000 mg per day. Good sources include milk, yogurt, fortified cereals, tofu and green, leafy vegetables.

Iron helps red blood cells and muscles carry oxygen. Good sources are fortified cereals, oysters, beans, lean red meat and spinach.

What is the ingredients list?

Packaged foods with more than 1 ingredient must list what's in the food on the label.

- Ingredients are listed by weight. Largest amounts are first.
- Skip or limit foods with added sugar. Look for sucrose, glucose, fructose, maple or corn syrup. Notice if these sugars are among the first few items listed.
- Check the ingredients list carefully if you are allergic to certain foods or need to avoid them.

How to Read a Food Label

NUTRITION FACTS

Serving Size: 1/2 c
Servings Per Container: 2

Amount Per Serving	
Calories	Fat 30
% Daily Value	



Professional models were used in all photos.

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