

Reading Food Labels

Get the Facts on Food Labels

Think about a food you would consider healthy. How do you know it's healthy?

One way we can tell if a food is good for us is by looking at the Nutrition Facts label on the product, but these can be deceptive. The Nutrition Facts label on a 20-ounce soda, for example, lists 100 calories, but you have to look at the serving size to determine an accurate amount. If the serving size is 8 ounces, and the bottle contains 2.5 servings, you're actually drinking 250 calories!

The example label below can help you learn what to look for and what to avoid.



These amounts tell you how much you actually get to eat or drink to equal the facts listed on the label. For example, this label lists 3g of fat per ½ cup, but there are 4 servings in the entire container.

There are different kinds of fats, and they are listed separately on the label. Mono-unsaturated and unsaturated fats are "good" fats, while you should avoid trans fats and saturated fats.

Carbohydrates are your body's source of energy. Carbs are often given a bad name, because they are broken down into grams of sugar. However, by choosing healthier foods with carbohydrates, like whole-wheat bread and fruit, you'll get added fiber and whole grains without added sugar.

Understanding % Daily Value
The amount of nutrients in a food is given in one or two ways: in grams (or milligrams) or as a percentage of the Daily Value, which is based on an adult's needs.
The goal is to eat about 100% of the Daily Value for each nutrient each day. A good rule of thumb: If the %Daily Value listed on the panel is 5% or less, the food contributes a small amount of that nutrient to the diet. If it is 20% or more, it is considered a high amount of the nutrient.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size ½ 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%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrates 13g	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:	
	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
Calories per gram: Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

A calorie is a unit of energy, so the number of calories on a label tells you the amount of energy in the food. If you eat more calories than your body needs, you may gain weight.

High cholesterol and high blood pressure put people at increased risk for heart disease. Limit your intake of cholesterol and sodium to help decrease your risk.

A food that is a good source of fiber has 2.5 to 4.9 grams of fiber or more in each serving. Fiber is important for a healthy digestive system as well as to help lower cholesterol. Adults need about 20 to 25 grams of fiber every day.

Your body needs protein to build and repair parts of the body, including the muscles and blood. Protein is found in beans and poultry, for example.