



How to Read the Food Label

You can make healthier food choices by reading the “Nutrition Facts” label.

Serving size: Look here first!

Is your serving the same as the one on the label?

- If you eat twice the serving size, you double the calories and other nutrient values.
- If you have diabetes or follow a specific meal plan, the serving size on the label may not match those in your meal plan.

Always check the serving size (see sample label on page 2).

Calories

This is the number of calories you’ll eat in one serving of a food.

Calories needed each day depends on your age, sex, height, weight, and amount of physical activity. Estimates range from 1,600 to 2,400 calories for women and 2,000 to 3,000 calories for men. If you’re trying to lose weight, avoid or limit high-calorie foods.

Percent Daily Value (DV)

This is a percentage of the recommended daily amount of a nutrient in one serving. DV is based on a 2,000-calorie per day diet.

The percentages help you find foods high in good nutrients and low in nutrients you want to avoid. If the value is 20% or more, it’s considered high. If it’s 5% or less, it’s low.

Total fat

This tells you how much fat is in one serving. A low-fat food has 3 grams (g) or less of total fat per serving.

Saturated fat and trans fat

Saturated fat and trans fat are included in the amount of total fat. They’re listed separately because we should try to limit or avoid them.

Diets high in these fats may increase the risk of heart disease.

A food is low in saturated fat if it has less than 1 gram per serving. Aim for fewer than 20 grams of saturated fat per day, and as little trans fat as possible.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is in foods from animal sources, such as meats, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy. Try to keep your cholesterol intake to less than 300 milligrams (mg) per day. A low-cholesterol food has less than 20 mg per serving.

Sodium

Too much sodium (salt) may raise your blood pressure. Less than 2,300 mg of sodium each day is recommended. A low-sodium food has 140 mg or less in one serving.

Total carbohydrate

Carbohydrates are in bread, pasta, rice, cereal, fruit, potatoes, starchy vegetables, and sweets. If you have diabetes, pay attention to total carb grams per serving, not just the sugar grams.

Dietary fiber

Fiber is in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. It's important to eat plenty of these foods. Fiber helps reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease and can help with weight control. Aim for 25 to 38 grams of fiber per day.

Sugars

Sugar is listed separately and is included in the total grams of carbs. It includes both naturally occurring sugar (like in fruit) and added sugar in syrups and processed food and drinks. Limit added sugars.

Protein

Protein is in both plant and animal foods, such as beans, nuts, fish, poultry, meat, eggs, and dairy products.

Check the serving size for how much you're actually eating. If you eat 2 servings, this doubles the calories and nutrients, including the Percent Daily Values (DV).

Make your calories count. Look at the calories on the label and compare them with the nutrients. Then decide if the food is a good choice for you.

Know your fats. Look for foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol to help reduce the risk of heart disease (5% DV or less). There's no DV for trans fat because it's best to limit or avoid it.

Keep sodium in check. Processed foods are often high in sodium. Look for low-sodium foods with less than 140 mg per serving. Track the total amount you eat.

Sample label

Nutrition Facts	
6 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (230g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	245
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	14%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 8mg	3%
Sodium 210mg	9%
Total Carbohydrate 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 7g	25%
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 4g Added Sugars	8%
Protein 11g	
Vitamin D 4mcg	20%
Calcium 210mg	16%
Iron 3mg	15%
Potassium 380mg	8%
*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated 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 • Carbohydrates 4 • Protein 4	

Fiber. Aim for 25 to 38 grams of fiber per day.

Sugars: Limit added sugars.

Some vitamins and minerals may be listed with DV in one serving.

Percent Daily Values (DV) tell you how much you should be eating based on a 2,000 or 2,500 calorie diet. This section is the same on every food label. It's a reminder about how much of these nutrients you should aim for each day.

Calories per gram shows the number of calories in a gram of fat, carbohydrate, and protein.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.

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