

Figuring Out Food Labels

Kids
Can Do
it!



Lots to Learn from the “Nutrition Facts” Food Label

1. Start Here

Serving Size and Servings Per Container –

The amount of calories and nutrients listed on the food label are all based on the serving size. If you eat double the serving size, you get double the calories and nutrients. If you eat half the serving size, you get half the calories and nutrients. The Servings Per Container tell you how many servings are in the whole package.

2. Check Calories

Total Calories and Calories from Fat –

The number on the left of the label tells you how many total calories you will get in one serving of the food. The number on the right tells you how many of the total calories in one serving come from fat.

3. Limit These Nutrients

Total Fat, Saturated fat, Trans Fat,

Cholesterol, and Sodium – Eating too much of these nutrients can cause health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Choose foods that are low in these nutrients.

4. Get Enough of These Nutrients

Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium, and Iron –

These important nutrients are needed every day to help your body stay healthy and strong. Be sure to eat foods that are high in these nutrients.

5. Footnote

This area shows your daily “budget” for nutrients like fats, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, and fiber. Your “budget” for these nutrients is based on a daily diet of 2,000 or 2,500 calories. Some people who are very active need more calories while less active people need fewer calories.

Sample label for Macaroni & Cheese

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

6

Quick Guide to % DV

• 5% or less is Low

• 20% or more is High

6. Quick Guide to Percent Daily Value (%DV)

The %DV tells you how much of the daily recommended amount of each nutrient is in one serving of the food. The %DV is based on a 2,000 calorie diet. If one serving of a food has a %DV of 25% for carbohydrate, that means a person who eats one serving will get 25% of the carbohydrates he or she needs in a day. The other 75% must come from other foods to reach the important 100%.

Quick Tip! A %DV of 5% or less means a serving of the food is low in that nutrient. A %DV of 20% or more means a serving of the food is high in that nutrient. Try to go low for things like fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium and high for things like fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron.

Nutrition Facts Label Glossary

Total Fat

Total fat includes four types of fat - saturated, trans, polyunsaturated, and monounsaturated. While fat has a bad reputation, everyone needs to consume some fat to maintain healthy brain, nerve, cardiovascular, and immune function. The problem is that most kids, teens, and adults eat too much total fat and too much saturated and trans fats. A low-fat food has 3 grams or less of total fat per serving.

Saturated Fat

Saturated fat raises your blood cholesterol more than anything else in your diet. To keep your heart healthy, make sure you don't eat too much! Aim for less than 20 grams of saturated fat a day – less is better! Limit high saturated fat foods like whole milk, cream, cheese, sour cream, ice cream, butter, lard, and the skin on turkey and chicken.

Trans Fat

Trans fat is also included in the total fat. Trans fats should be avoided because they raise your bad cholesterol (LDLs) and decrease your good cholesterol (HDLs). The major source of trans fats in the diet is partially-hydrogenated or hydrogenated oils which are often found in vegetable shortening, margarine, crackers, cookies, brownies, and muffins. Check the ingredients label and avoid foods with partially hydrogenated oils or hydrogenated oils!

Polyunsaturated and Monounsaturated Fats

These two types of fats are more heart healthy because they do not raise your cholesterol. Try to get most of your fat from these types of fats. Good sources include salmon, nuts, seeds, olives, avocados, soybean oil, olive oil and canola oil.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is found only in foods from animal sources, such as beef, eggs, cheese, and chicken. Try to keep your cholesterol intake below 300 milligrams (mg) per day. Too much cholesterol can lead to heart disease.

Sodium

We know this as “salt.” Too much sodium may raise your blood pressure. Aim for less than 2,300 mg per day. A low sodium food has 140 mg or less in one serving.

Total Carbohydrate, Dietary Fiber, and Sugars

Carbohydrates are found in bread, pasta, rice, cereal, fruit, potatoes, milk, starchy vegetables, and sweets. Carbohydrates are your body's primary source of energy. Fiber and sugar are two types of carbohydrates. It is important to eat lots of fiber (25-30 grams/day) because it can help reduce the risk of heart disease. Sugar, on the other hand, should be limited. The sugar listed on the nutrition label includes both naturally occurring sugar and added sugar.

Protein

Protein's main job is to build muscle, keep organs strong, and fight off disease. Protein is found in both plant and animal foods, including fish, poultry, meat, eggs, beans, tofu, and nuts.

Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium, and Iron

The Nutrition Facts label tells you how much of these important vitamins and minerals are in one serving of the food. The amount is measured in % Daily Values. If the label says the %DV for vitamin A is 80%, that means one serving provides 80% of the vitamin A needed for a person who eats a 2,000-calorie diet.



CanDo – Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity
Poudre Valley Hospital Foundation
1024 South Lemay Avenue | Fort Collins, CO 80524
Phone: (970) 495-7517 | ve2@pvhs.org
www.CanDoOnline.org

Supported By:
LiveWell Colorado

kids
CanDo
it!