

Unraveling the food label mystery



Any good mystery has a beginning, an ending and lots of clues along the way. Food labels may seem a bit like a mystery if you're not familiar with them, but with a little practical knowledge and common sense, you'll have all the clues you need for good nutrition.

Finding the facts

The Nutrition Facts food label gives you information about which nutrients are in a particular food or beverage. Your body needs the right combination of nutrients, such as vitamins, to work properly and grow. The Nutrition Facts label is printed somewhere on the outside of packaged food, and you usually don't have to look hard to find it. Fresh food that doesn't come prepackaged sometimes has nutrition facts, too.

The Nutrition Facts label is important because it helps you:

- Check serving size and calories
- Determine where your calories are coming from (fat, protein or carbohydrate)
- Look for sugar content—read the ingredient list and make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few ingredients
- Know your fats and look for foods low in saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol to help reduce the risk of heart disease (5 Percent Daily Value or less is low; 20 Percent Daily Value or more is high)
- Reduce sodium (salt) and increase potassium, which may reduce the risk of high blood pressure

Turn the page for more food label clues.



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The evidence is conclusive



Once you learn and begin using the information provided on the Nutrition Facts label, you'll solve the food label mystery and be well on your way to making healthier food choices. Here are some helpful tips:

Start here

Note serving sizes and number of servings in the package.

Check calories

Keep in mind the number of servings you consume determines the calories you eat.

Limit these nutrients

Look at the amount of total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium and use the Percent Daily Value as your guide.

Get enough of these nutrients

Focus on the amount of dietary fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium and iron since most of us get a limited amount of these nutrients in our diets.

Understand the label footnote

This information is the same on all food labels and will offer guidance on nutrients to limit.

Rely on the Percent Daily Value

These calculations make reading labels a snap. The percentages are based on recommendations for key nutrients for a 2,000 calorie daily diet. But, you can use the percentages to see if a serving is high or low in a nutrient.

Start here →

Check calories

Limit these nutrients

Get enough of these nutrients

Footnote ↙ ↘

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%
Potassium 700mg	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

Quick guide to %DV

• 5% or less is low

• 20% or more is high

Want to learn more about food labels? Get clued in by using the *Ask A Dietitian* feature from the Personal Health Manager available to you through Blue Access® for Members.