

Decoding the Food Label



Grocery shopping can be intimidating when you're trying to eat healthy. Along with a vast array of food choices, consumers are faced with often-confusing marketing language. Knowing which foods to buy is essential in selecting nutritious items. Being able to decipher food labels will help you know what foods should be part of your diet and what foods should be left on the shelf.

How do I read a food label?

Learning how to read a food label can help you navigate the choices and sometimes deceptive packaging on food. Let's start from the top of the label and work our way down.

- The **serving size** and **servings per container** provide a way to compare foods and monitor what you eat. Nutrient amounts in the lower sections of the label are based on one serving and need to be multiplied, depending on the number of servings you eat.
- **Calories** tell you how much energy you get from foods. Based on a daily intake of 2,000 calories, 40 kcals is considered low, 100 moderate and 400 or more kcals high. You also only want 35 percent or less of your calorie intake to be from fat.
- The next section is **nutrients**. Let's break this section down into two sections — nutrients you want to limit and nutrients you want to get plenty of.
 - Nutrients to limit include fat, cholesterol, sodium and carbohydrates. Large quantities of these can lead to chronic illnesses such as heart disease.
 - Nutrients you want to get plenty of include vitamins and minerals, which can help reduce the risk of some diseases and conditions.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	1 cup (228 g)
Servings Per Container	2

Amount Per Serving	
Calories	250
Calories from Fat	110

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
<i>Trans</i> Fat 1.5g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 450mg	20%
Total Carbohydrates 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 3g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%



- The **percent daily values** section shows what percentage of the recommended amount of a particular nutrient you are consuming, based on a 2,000-calorie diet. If you eat more or less than 2,000 calories a day, your percentages will differ.

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- The last part of a food label is the **footnote**, which informs you that the percent daily values (DV) are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. This information must appear on every label. The second half of the footnote provides information on the DV for each nutrient listed and is based on public health experts' advice. DV is provided for certain nutrients depending on 2,000- and 2,500-calorie diets respectively.

*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

More information about how to read and understand a food nutrition label can be found on the Food and Drug Administration website at www.fda.gov.

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