

How to Read Food Labels

To make smart food choices, it is important to read the labels on the packages of food you buy. The health claims on the front of the package are not always the best place to look. The nutrition facts label will give you more information. Knowing how to read food labels can help you make better choices at the grocery store.

Serving size

The **servings size** is the amount of food you would need to eat to get the amount of listed nutrients. The **servings per container** tell how many servings are in the whole package.

Check calories

Calories are the amount of energy that the food or drink gives you. The total number of calories depends on how many servings you eat. For example, if you ate two servings of this food, the number of calories would double to 460.

Limit saturated and trans fats

Compare brands and choose the one with less saturated fat. Always look for foods with 0g trans fat.

Increase your Fiber

Fiber makes you feel full. Compare brands and look for the ones with more fiber. Aim for at least 3 grams of fiber in grain foods like cereal, pasta, granola bars, and bread.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	Calories 230
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

Ingredients Whole Grain Wheat, Sugar, Corn Bran, Whole Grain Oats, Whole Grain Rice, Almonds, Wheat Bran, Corn Syrup, Canola Oil, Salt, Puffed Wheat, Brown Sugar Syrup, Corn Starch, Wheat Flour, Graham Flour, Malt Syrup, Tripotassium Phosphate, Molasses, Color Added, Natural Flavor, Honey, Baking Soda, Vitamin E (mixed tocopherols) and Ascorbic Acid Added to Preserve Freshness.

% Daily Values

Quick Guide to % of Daily Value

- 5% or less is **Low**
- 20% or more is **High**

Limit Sodium

Look on the front of the package for "low sodium", "reduced sodium", or "no salt added". Compare brands and choose the one with less sodium.

Limit added Sugar

Choose beverages with 3 grams of sugar or less. Choose foods with the least amount of added sugar you can find. Kids over 2 should get no more than 24 grams of added sugar per day. Kids under 2 should not have added sugar.

Choose whole grains

To help increase fiber, "whole" should be in the first ingredient in grain foods (look for "whole wheat" or "whole grain," for example).

What do the words on the food label mean?

Don't be fooled by words on the front of a package. Always read the food label. Here are some of the common terms you may find on a food label:

- **Calorie.** A unit that tells you how much energy a food gives the body.
- **Saturated fat.** A fat that is solid at room temperature. It is found in things like butter, cheese, whole milk, ice cream, and meat.
- **Trans fat.** A liquid fat that is treated (hydrogenated) so it is solid at room temperature. It is in cookies, crackers, fried foods, and processed foods.
- **Unsaturated fat.** A fat that is liquid at room temperature. It is found in vegetable oils, nuts, and fish. There are 2 kinds: Poly- and Mono-unsaturated.
- **Cholesterol.** A type of fat your body needs to make vitamin D, some hormones, and other important things. It is in food products such as high-fat dairy products, egg yolks, and high-fat meat. Food cholesterol does not affect body cholesterol.
- **Sodium.** A component of salt. Almost all foods have sodium in them naturally, but processed foods have a lot of added sodium.
- **Total carbohydrate.** A combination of many types of carbohydrates: dietary fibers, sugars, and other carbohydrates.
- **Protein.** A part of food that the body needs to grow, repair itself and build muscle. It can be found in meat, fish, dairy, soy, beans, nuts, and other foods.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or dietitian if you have any concerns or if your child has special health care needs not covered by this information.

This sheet was created to help you care for your child or family member. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment and follow-up.