

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 **serving 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. If you ate two servings of this food, the number of calories would double to 320.

Limit saturated and trans fats

Look for foods that have:

- 2 grams of saturated fat or less
- 0 grams of trans fat

Increase your Fiber

Fiber makes you feel full. 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	1 Packet (43g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	160
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 2g	3%
Saturated Fat 0.5g	2%
Trans Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 0.5g	
Monounsaturated Fat 1g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 33g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	13%
Soluble Fiber 1g	
Total Sugars 11g	
Includes 8g Added Sugars	16%
Protein 4g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 20mg	0%
Iron 1.2mg	6%
Potassium 150mg	2%
*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.	
Ingredients: Whole grain oats, sugar, dried apples, natural flavor, salt, cinnamon.	

Quick Guide to % of Daily Value (%DV)

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

Limit Sodium

Choose foods with 15% of the daily value of sodium or less

Limit added Sugar

- Choose beverages with 3 grams of added sugar or less
- Choose foods with 9 grams of added sugar or less

Choose whole grains

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

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.