



# Understanding and Using the Nutrition Facts Label

The Nutrition Facts Label found on packaged foods and beverages is your daily tool for making informed food choices that contribute to healthy lifelong eating habits. Explore it today and discover the wealth of information it contains!

▶ **Serving Size** is based on the amount of food that is customarily eaten at one time. All of the nutrition information listed on the Nutrition Facts Label is based on **one serving** of the food.

- When comparing calories and nutrients in different foods, check the serving size in order to make an accurate comparison.

▶ **Servings Per Container** shows the total number of servings in the entire food package or container. One package of food may contain more than one serving.

- If a package contains *two servings* and you eat the entire package, you have consumed *twice the amount of calories and nutrients* listed on the label.

▶ **Calories** refers to the total number of calories, or “energy,” supplied from all sources (fat, carbohydrate, protein, and alcohol) in one serving of the food.

- To achieve or maintain a healthy weight, balance the number of calories you consume with the number of calories your body uses.

**As a general rule:**

**100 calories** per serving is **moderate**  
**400 calories** per serving is **high**

▶ **Calories from Fat** are *not* additional calories, but are **fat’s contribution to the total number of calories** in one serving of the food.

- “Fat-free” doesn’t mean “calorie-free.” Some lower fat food items may have as many calories as the full-fat versions.

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 package (272g)			
Servings Per Container 1			
Amount Per Serving			
<b>Calories</b> 300		Calories from Fat 45	
		% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 5g			<b>8%</b>
Saturated Fat 1.5g			<b>8%</b>
Trans Fat 0g			
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg			<b>10%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 430mg			<b>18%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 55g			<b>18%</b>
Dietary Fiber 6g			<b>24%</b>
Sugars 23g			
<b>Protein</b> 14g			
Vitamin A			80%
Vitamin C			35%
Calcium			6%
Iron			15%
* 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
Saturated 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

The Nutrition Facts Label can help you learn about the **nutrient content** of many foods in your diet. It enables you to monitor the nutrients you want to get less of and those you want to get more of.

▶ **Nutrients to get less of** – get less than 100% DV of these nutrients each day: saturated fat, *trans* fat, cholesterol, and sodium. (Note: *trans* fat has no %DV, so use the amount of grams as a guide)

▶ **Nutrients to get more of** – get 100% DV of these nutrients on most days: dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron.

▶ **% Daily Value (%DV)** shows how much of a nutrient is in one serving of the food. The %DV column doesn’t add up vertically to 100%. Instead, the %DV is the percentage of the Daily Value (the amounts of key nutrients recommended per day for Americans 4 years of age and older) for each nutrient in one serving of the food.

- Use the %DV to compare food products and to choose products that are higher in nutrients you want to get more of and lower in nutrients you want to get less of.

**As a general rule:**

**5% DV** or less of a nutrient per serving is **low**  
**20% DV** or more of a nutrient per serving is **high**

▶ **Footnote with Daily Values**

Some of the %DVs are based on a **2,000 calorie daily diet**. However, your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs, which vary according to age, gender, height, weight, and physical activity level. Check your calorie needs at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov>.

- If there is enough space available on the food package, the Nutrition Facts Label will also list the **Daily Values** and **goals** for some key nutrients. These are given for both a 2,000 and 2,500 calorie daily diet.

**TIP** ▶ The Ingredient List is usually located near the name of the food’s manufacturer and often below the Nutrition Facts Label. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight – the closer they are to the beginning of the list, the more of that ingredient is in the food.



# Action Steps

## For a Healthy Diet

Find your healthy eating style and maintain it throughout your lifetime. Smart choices can help you be healthier now and in the future!

### Fruits

- ▶ Consume at least half of your daily fruit choices as whole fruits (such as fresh, frozen, cooked, dried, or canned in 100% fruit juice).
- ▶ Choose 100% fruit juice instead of sugar-sweetened beverages (such as energy drinks, flavored waters, fruit drinks, soft drinks, and sports drinks).
- ▶ Try fruit as snacks, salads, side dishes, and desserts.

### Vegetables

- ▶ Eat more colorful vegetables (such as fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and 100% vegetable juices.
- ▶ Buy frozen (without butter or sauce) or low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables.
- ▶ Try vegetables as snacks, salads, and side dishes and incorporate vegetables into main dishes.

### Grains

- ▶ Consume at least half of your total grain choices as whole grains (such as whole wheat, whole oats, and brown rice). Whole grains are a source of important vitamins and minerals and are typically high in dietary fiber, too.
- ▶ Switch from refined to whole grain versions of commonly consumed foods (such as breads, cereals, pasta, and rice).
- ▶ Limit refined grains and products made with refined grains, especially those high in calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and/or sodium (such as cakes, chips, cookies, and crackers).

### Dairy

- ▶ Substitute fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) dairy products (such as cheese, milk, and yogurt) or fortified soy beverages for regular/full-fat (whole) dairy products.
- ▶ Limit dairy desserts, especially those high in calories, saturated fat, and added sugars (such as ice cream, other frozen desserts, and puddings).

### Protein

- ▶ Eat a variety of protein foods, such as beans and peas, eggs, fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) dairy products, lean meats and poultry, seafood (fish and shellfish), soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.
- ▶ Choose seafood and plant sources of protein (such as beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds) in place of some meats and poultry.
- ▶ Add beans or peas to salads, soups, and side dishes, or serve them as a main dish.
- ▶ Snack on a small handful of unsalted nuts or seeds rather than chips or salty snack foods.

### Saturated Fat, Sodium, and Sugars

- ▶ Choose fresh meats, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed varieties.
- ▶ Switch from stick margarine to soft margarine (liquid, spray, or tub).
- ▶ Look for light, low sodium, reduced sodium, or no-salt-added versions of packaged foods, snacks, and condiments, when available.
- ▶ Limit desserts, savory snacks, and sweets (such as cakes, chips, candies, cookies, crackers, ice cream, and microwave popcorn).
- ▶ Consume smaller portions of foods and beverages that are higher in saturated fat, sodium, and sugars, or consume them less often.

### Helpful Meal Preparation Tips

- Try baking, broiling, grilling, or steaming. These cooking methods do not add extra fat.
- Trim or drain fat from meats before or after cooking and remove poultry skin before cooking or eating.
- Cook and bake with liquid oils (such as canola and olive oil) instead of solid fats (such as butter, lard, and shortening).
- Prepare your own food when you can and limit packaged sauces, mixes, and “instant” products (including flavored rice, instant noodles, and ready-made pasta).
- Limit the amount of salt and sugar you add when cooking, baking, or eating.
- Flavor foods with herbs and spices and no-salt seasoning blends instead of salt.
- Rinse sodium-containing canned foods, such as tuna, vegetables, and beans before eating.
- When eating out, ask how your food is being prepared. You can also request to see nutrition information, which is available in many chain restaurants.

