



# How to Read the Food Label

Read the “Nutrition Facts” food label to make healthier choices Values are for one serving size.

## Check the serving size first!

If you eat twice the serving size, you double the calories and other nutrients. If you have diabetes or follow a specific meal plan, the serving size on the label may not match your meal plan.

## Make your calories count.

Calories needed each day depend on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity. If you’re trying to lose weight, avoid or limit high-calorie foods.

## Know your fats.

We should limit the amount of “bad” fats we eat. A low-fat food has 3 grams (g) or less of total fat per serving.

### Saturated fat

Saturated fat is included in the amount of total fat. It’s listed separately because we should limit or avoid it. This fat may increase the risk of heart disease. A food is low in saturated fat if it has less than 1 gram per serving. Aim for fewer than 20 grams of saturated fat per day.

## Review % Daily Value (DV).

When comparing the nutrition of two brands, look for a product with lower percent (%) DV in saturated fats, sodium, cholesterol, and added sugars, and a higher % DV in fiber. If the value is 20% or more, it’s high. If it’s 5% or less, it’s low.

## Scan the ingredients list.

If there are many additives in the list, the food is likely highly processed. It’s healthier to choose whole foods and eat fewer processed foods.

## Sample label

Nutrition Facts	
6 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>1 cup (230g)</b>
Amount per serving	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>245</b>
	<b>% Daily Value*</b>
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	<b>14%</b>
Saturated Fat 2g	<b>10%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 8mg	<b>3%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 210mg	<b>9%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 34g	<b>12%</b>
Dietary Fiber 7g	<b>25%</b>
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 4g Added Sugars	<b>8%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 11g	
Vitamin D 4mcg	20%
Calcium 210mg	16%
Iron 3mg	15%
Potassium 380mg	8%

\*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.

## Total carbohydrate (carbs)

Carbs are in bread, pasta, rice, cereal, fruit, potatoes, starchy vegetables, and sweets. If you have diabetes, read the total carb grams per serving, not just the sugar grams.

## Dietary fiber

Fiber is in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. It’s important to eat plenty of these foods. Fiber helps reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease and can help with weight control. Aim for 25 to 38 grams of fiber per day.

## Sugars

Sugar is listed separately and is included in the total grams of carbs. It includes both naturally occurring sugar (like in fruit) and added sugar in syrups and processed food and drinks. Limit added sugars. They’re empty calories and have been linked to high LDL (“bad”) cholesterol and triglycerides, hypertension, heart disease, and diabetes.

## Protein

Protein is in both plant and animal foods, such as beans, nuts, fish, poultry, meat, eggs, and dairy products.

## Check these nutrients.

### Cholesterol

Cholesterol is in foods from animal sources, such as meats, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy. Try to keep your cholesterol intake to less than 300 milligrams (mg) per day. A low cholesterol food has less than 20 mg per serving.

### Sodium

Too much sodium (salt) may raise your blood pressure. Less than 2,300 mg of sodium each day is recommended for most people. People with high blood pressure, heart failure, or kidney disease should have less than 1,500 mg per day. A low-sodium food has 140 mg or less in one serving.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.

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