



A quick check of the “Nutrition Facts” label can help you spot foods that are good for your health.

You can learn a lot about what you are eating by reading the “Nutrition Facts” label on the foods you buy. Used well, this information can help you make healthier choices.

Serving size: Look here first!

Is your serving the same as the one on the label? If you eat double the serving size listed, you need to double the calories and other nutrient values. If you have diabetes or are following a specific meal plan, the serving size on the label may not match the serving sizes in your meal plan. Always double check the serving size.

See sample label on the reverse side.

Calories

This is the number of calories you will consume in one serving of this product. If you are trying to lose weight, cut back on calories. A food can be called low-calorie if it has less than 40 calories per serving.

Total fat

This tells you how much fat is in one serving. Most people need to cut back on fat. A low-fat food has 3 grams (g) or less of total fat per serving.

Saturated fat and trans fat

Saturated fat and trans fat are included in the amount of total fat. They are also listed separately because they are the two types of fat we should try to limit or avoid in our diets.

Both saturated and trans fats in your diet can raise your cholesterol level. Diets high in these fats may increase the risk of heart disease. Trans fats increase your risk more than saturated. Not only do trans fats raise total cholesterol levels, they also lower good cholesterol (HDL) which helps protect against 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, and as little trans fat as possible.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is found only in foods from animal sources, such as meats, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products. 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

We know this as “salt.” Too much sodium may raise your blood pressure. Aim for less than 1,500 mg per day. A low-sodium food has 140 mg or less in one serving.

Total carbohydrate

Carbohydrates are found in bread, pasta, rice, cereal, fruit, potatoes, starchy vegetables, and sweets. If you have diabetes, pay attention to total carbohydrate grams per serving, not just the sugar grams.

Dietary fiber

It is important to eat plenty of fiber, and most Americans don't get enough. Aim for 25 to 30 grams of fiber per day. It is found in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.

Sugars

Sugar is listed separately, and is also included in the total grams of carbohydrate. It includes both naturally-occurring and added sugar.

Protein

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

Percent daily value (DV)

This is the amount of each nutrient that this food contributes to a 2,000 calorie diet. You may eat more or fewer calories each day, so your percentages may differ. The important part of these percentages is that they show when a food is "high" or "low" in something. If the value is 20% or more, it's considered high. If it's 5% or less, it's low.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Visit kp.org/nutrition for more tips on healthy eating.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

Sample label for macaroni and cheese

Check the serving size: Look at the serving size to find out how many servings you are actually consuming. If you eat two servings, you will double the calories and nutrients, including the % Daily Values (DV).

Make your calories count: Look at the calories on the label and compare them with the nutrients it contains. Then decide whether the food is a good choice for you.

Know your fats. Look for foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol to help reduce the risk of heart disease (5% DV or less). There is no DV for trans fat because it is best to limit or avoid it entirely.

Keep sodium in check. Processed foods like this macaroni and cheese are often high in sodium. Look for low-sodium foods with less than 140 mg per serving.

Some vitamins and minerals may be listed with percentage of daily values in one serving.

Daily Values tell you how much you should be eating based on a 2,000 or 2,500 calorie diet. This section is the same on every food label. It is a reference to remind you how much of these nutrients you should aim for each day.

Reminder of the number of calories in a gram of fat, carbohydrate and protein. This is the same on every food label.

Nutrition Facts

Serving size 1 cup (226g)

Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 **Calories from Fat** 110

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 12g 18%

Saturated Fat 3g 15%

Trans Fat 1.5g

Cholesterol 30mg 10%

Sodium 470mg 20%

Total Carbohydrate 31g 10%

Dietary Fiber 0g 0%

Sugars 5g

Protein 5g

Vitamin A 4% • Vitamin C 2%

Calcium 20% • Iron 4%

*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 65 g 80 g

Sat Fat Less than 20 g 25 g

Cholesterol Less than 300 mg 300mg

Sodium Less than 2400 mg 2400 mg

Total Carbohydrate 300g 375g

Dietary Fiber 25g 30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrates 4 • Protein 4