

How to Read a Food Label

Shopping for food can be a difficult task. Knowing how to read a food label can help you choose healthy foods for you and your family. The label lets you see the nutrients in the food, compare the nutritional values of different items, and make healthier food choices.

SAMPLE FOOD LABEL:

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g) 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 3g	
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 65g 80g
Sat 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

Each section of the sample food label is numbered:

1. Serving Size and Servings Per Container: Start reading the food label here first. A serving size is the amount of food in the container that is considered to be 1 portion or 1 serving. If the label says the serving size is 1 cup and there are 2 servings per container, this means there is a total of 2 cups per container. If you eat the whole container, you are eating 2 servings.

2. Calories: Calories is how much energy you get in 1 serving of the food. This sample label tells you that a 1 cup serving of this food is 250 calories, so if you eat 2 cups of this food, you will be eating 500 calories.

3. Limit these Nutrients: This section lists “total fat,” “saturated fat,” “trans fat,” “cholesterol,” and “sodium.” If you limit these items you can help reduce the risk of certain diseases, such as heart disease, some cancers, and high blood pressure.

4. Carbohydrates: These are the “dietary fibers” and “sugars.” Try to eat more dietary fibers and less sugar. If you eat more fiber, you can lower your risk of some diseases and conditions, such as heart disease and constipation.

5. Get enough of these: This section lists vitamins, calcium and iron. You want to eat enough of these. When you eat these, you can improve your health and lower your risk of some diseases.

6. Quick Guide to “% Daily Value”:

- 5% daily value or less means that a serving of this food is low in this nutrient.
- Choose foods with 5% or less total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium.
- 20% daily value or more means that a food serving is high in a nutrient.