

Understanding Food Nutrition Labels

Serving Size

Check to see if your serving is the same size as the one on the label. If you eat double the serving size listed, you need to double the nutrient and caloric values. If you eat one-half the serving size shown here, the nutrient and caloric values should be halved.

Calories

Look here to see what a serving of food adds to your daily calorie total. A person's size and activity level help determine total calories needed per day. For example, a 138-lb active woman needs about 2,000 calories each day, while a 160-lb active woman needs about 2,300.

Total Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are found in foods like bread, potatoes, fruits, and vegetables. They are a key element in your diet, giving you nutrients and energy.

Dietary Fiber

It is important to consume fiber in your diet. Fiber (also called "roughage") can be soluble or insoluble (unabsorbed) dietary fiber. Fruits, vegetables, whole-grain foods, beans, and legumes are all good sources of fiber.

Protein

Most adults get more protein than they need. Protein from animal sources contains both fat and cholesterol, so eat small servings of lean meat, fish, and poultry. Use skim or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese. You also can get your protein from beans, grains, and cereals.

Vitamins & Minerals

Make it your goal to get 100% of each every day. Let a combination of foods contribute to a winning score.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (114 g)
Servings Per Container 4

Amount Per Serving

Calories 90 Calories from Fat 30

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 3 g 5%

Saturated Fat 0 g 0%

Cholesterol 0 mg 0%

Sodium 300 mg 13%

Total Carbohydrate 13 g 4%

Dietary Fiber 3 g 12%

Sugars 3 g

Protein 3 g

Vitamin A 80% • Vitamin C 60%

Calcium 4% • 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	300 mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400 mg	2,400 mg
Total Carbohydrate		300 g	375 g
Dietary Fiber		25 g	30 g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Total Fat

Try to limit your calories from fat. Choose foods with less than 30% of calories derived from fat. Foods with more than 30% fat are considered high fat.

Saturated Fat

Saturated fat is the "bad" fat. It is the key player in raising blood cholesterol and your risk of heart disease. Avoid it!

Cholesterol

Challenge yourself to keep your cholesterol to less than 300 mg of cholesterol each day. Too much cholesterol can contribute to heart disease.

Sodium

Too much sodium (salt) can add up to high blood pressure in some people. Generally keep your sodium intake to 2,400 to 3,000 mg per day. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends no more than 3,000 mg of sodium per day for healthy adults.

Daily Values

Indicates how much of a specific nutrient a serving of food contains compared to a 2,000-calorie diet. A product is considered a good source of a particular nutrient if one serving provides 10% to 19% of the Daily Value and is considered high in a given nutrient if it contains 20% or more of the Daily Value. If the Daily Value is 5% or less, the food is low in that nutrient.

Additional nutrients may be listed on some food labels:

g = grams (about 28 g = 1 ounce).
mg = milligrams (1,000 mg = 1 g).

Other Terms You May See on Packages:

Reduced—This means that the product has been nutritionally altered so that it now contains 25% less of a specific nutrient, such as fat, calories, sugar, or sodium.

Free—This means that the product contains none or almost none of the specified nutrient. For example, sugar-free foods have less than 0.5 gram of sugar per serving. However, sugar-free does not mean carbohydrate-free. Compare the total carbohydrate content of a sugar-free food with that of the standard product. If there is a big difference in carbohydrate content between the 2 foods, buy the sugar-free food.