

# How to Read the Food Label



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



**Y**ou can learn a lot about the foods you are eating just by reading the “Nutrition Facts” food label.

## **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. *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.

## **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**

Saturated fat is included in the total fat. It is listed separately because saturated fat raises your blood cholesterol more than anything else in your diet.

## **Trans fat**

Trans fat is formed by hydrogenation, a process in which heat and hydrogen are added to vegetable oil, changing it from a liquid into a solid. Trans fat gives processed foods a longer shelf life. While some trans fat is found

naturally in some foods, the major source in the diet is partially hydrogenated oil. Trans fat is found in some vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, cookies, snack foods, and other foods made with or fried in partially hydrogenated oils. Trans fats pose a higher risk of heart disease than saturated fats. Not only do trans fats raise total cholesterol levels, they also lower good cholesterol (HDL) which helps protect against heart disease. It is important to limit your intake of foods containing trans fat.

**You can spot high fat and trans fat foods by checking the “Nutrition Facts” panel.**

As of 2006, all food companies are required to list trans fat on their nutrition labels. Avoid foods with “hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils.” Keep in mind that an item may say “trans-fat-free” as long as it has **less than** 0.5 grams per serving. Something could be labeled “trans-fat free,” but still have hydrogenated oil as an ingredient. Choose naturally low-fat foods such as vegetables, fruits, low-fat cuts of meats, poultry or fish, beans, whole grains, breads, and some cereals.

## **Cholesterol**

Cholesterol is found only in foods from animal sources, such as chicken, fish, beef, eggs, cheese, to name a few. Try to keep your cholesterol intake to less than 300 milligrams per day. Too much cholesterol can lead to heart disease.



## Sample label for macaroni and cheese

Start here:

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size 1 cup (226g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 1.5g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
<b>Protein</b> 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 2400mg 2400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

Limit these nutrients:

Get enough fiber, minerals, and vitamins:

This Daily Value information may not apply to you:

Quick guide to Daily Value:

- 5% or less is low
- 20% or more is high in a particular nutrient listed on the label

For example, a double serving size means twice the calories and other nutrients.

	1 serving = 1 cup	2 servings = 2 cups
Total Fat	12g	24g
Saturated Fat	3g	6g
Trans Fat	1.5g	3g
Cholesterol	30mg	60mg
Sodium	470mg	940mg
Total Carbohydrate	31g	62g
Dietary Fiber	0g	0g
Sugars	5g	10g
Protein	5g	10g

## Sodium

We know this as “salt.” Too much sodium may raise your blood pressure. Aim for 2,300 mg or less 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 (sugary foods). If you have diabetes, pay attention to total carbohydrate grams per serving, not just the sugar grams.

## Dietary fiber

It is important to eat lots of fiber because it can help reduce the risk of heart disease. Aim for 25 to 30 g of fiber per day. It is found in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.

## Sugars

Sugar is included in total carbohydrate grams. Sugar includes both naturally occurring sugar and added sugar.

## Protein

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

## Percent daily value

Daily values are based on a 2,000 calorie per day diet. You may eat more or less of each nutrient listed, depending on your calorie needs every day.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other medical professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have further questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need additional information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist.