

FOOD LABELS

- Taking a closer look at the label
- List of Ingredients
- Serving Size
- % Daily values
- Recommended Amounts

Label Contents

- Calories
- Total Fat
- Saturated Fat
- Cholesterol
- Sodium
- Total Carbohydrate
- Fiber
- Protein

Calories

- If you are trying to lose or maintain your weight, the number of calories you eat counts. Less calories than you usually eat helps make you lose weight. You can use the labels to compare similar products and determine which contain fewer calories. To find out how many calories you need each day, talk with your dietician or doctor.

Claims for Calories

- Calorie Free - less than 5 calories per serving
- Low Calorie - 40 Calories or less per serving

Total Fat

- Total Fat tells you how much fat is in a food per serving. It includes fats that are good for you such as mono and polyunsaturated fats, and fats that are not so good such as saturated and trans fats. Mono and Polyunsaturated fats can help lower your blood cholesterol and protect your heart. Saturated and trans fats can raise your cholesterol and increase your risk of heart disease.

Claims for Fats

- Fat Free - Less than 0.5 mg of fat or saturated fat per serving
- Saturated Fat Free - Less than 0.5 mg of saturated fat and less than 0.5 mg of trans fatty acids
- Low Fat - 3g or less of total fat
- Low Saturated Fat - 1g or less of saturated fat
- Reduced Fat or less fat - at least 25% less fat than the regular version

Sodium

- Sodium is a technical name for table salt. Table salt is very high in sodium. With many foods you can taste how salty they are, such as pickles or bacon. But there is also a hidden salt in many foods like cheeses, salad dressings, canned soups, etc. Reading labels will help you compare sodium in different foods. You can try using spices and herbs in cooking instead of adding salt.

Claims for Sodium

- Sodium Free - less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
- Very Low Sodium - 35 mg sodium or less
- Low Sodium - 140 mg of sodium or less
- Reduced sodium or less sodium - at least 25% less sodium than the regular version

Total Carbohydrate

- If you are counting carbs, food labels can provide you with the information you need for meal planning. Look at the grams of Total Carbohydrates, rather than the grams of sugar, complex carbohydrates, and fiber. If you are looking only at the sugar number, you may end up excluding nutritious foods such as cereals and grains that have no natural or added sugar, but do contain a lot of carbohydrates. The grams of sugar and fiber are counted as part of the grams of total carbohydrate.

Fiber

- Fiber is part of the plant foods that is not digested. Dried beans such as kidney or pinto beans, fruits, vegetables and grains are all good sources of fiber. The recommendation is to eat 25-30 grams of fiber per day. People with diabetes need the same amount of fiber as everyone else.

Claims for Fiber

- High Fiber - 5g or more of fiber per serving
- Good source of Fiber - 2.5g to 4.9g of fiber per serving

Protein

- Protein helps build muscle. It is found in meat, nuts, eggs, and dry beans. Try to eat lean cuts of meat. Protein also give you energy.

List of Ingredients

- Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, meaning the first ingredient makes up the largest proportion of the food. Check the ingredient list to spot things you would like to avoid, such as coconut oil or palm oil, which are high in saturated fat. Also try to avoid hydrogenated oils that are high in trans fats. They are not listed by total amount on the label, but you can choose foods that don't list hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil on the ingredient list.
- The ingredient list is also a good place to look for heart-healthy ingredients such as soy, mono-saturated fats, such as olive, canola, peanut oils; or whole grains, like whole wheat flour and oats.

Serving Size

- The serving size is usually less than most people eat. If you eat two servings, make sure you double the calories and all of the daily values. When comparing foods, make sure the serving sizes are the same.

% Daily Values

- This shows how much of the recommended amounts of these nutrients are in one serving (based on a 2000 calorie diet) . These percentages make it easy to compare one brand with another. Just make sure the serving size is the same. The goal is to eat no more than 100% of each nutrient each day.

Recommended Amounts

- Here you can see the recommended daily amounts for each nutrient for 2 calorie levels, a 2000 calorie and a 2500 calorie day diet. Your recommended daily calories should be higher or lower depending on your age, gender, and how active you are. However, notice the recommended amount of Sodium and cholesterol are the same not matter how many calories you eat.