

Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Shop Smart — Get the Facts on Food Labels

Become a smart shopper by reading food labels to find out more about the foods you eat. The Nutrition Facts panel found on most food labels will help you:

- Find out which foods are good sources of fiber, calcium, iron, and vitamin C
- Compare similar foods to find out which one is lower in fat and calories
- Search for low-sodium foods
- Look for foods that are low in saturated fat and trans fats

A Quick Guide to Reading the Nutrition Facts Label

Start with the Serving Size

- Look here for both the serving size (the amount for one serving), and the number of servings in the package.
- Remember to check your portion size to the serving size listed on the label. If the label serving size is one cup, and you eat two cups, you are getting twice the calories, fat and other nutrients listed on the label.

Check Out the Total Calories and Fat

Find out how many calories are in a single serving and the number of calories from fat. It's smart to cut back on calories and fat if you are watching your weight!

Let the Percent Daily Values Be Your Guide

Use percent Daily Values (DV) to help you evaluate how a particular food fits into your daily meal plan:

- Daily Values are average levels of nutrients for a person eating 2,000 calories a day. A food item with a 5% DV means 5% of the amount of fat that a person consuming 2,000 calories a day would eat.
- Remember: percent DV are for the entire day—not just for one meal or snack.
- You may need more or less than 2,000 calories per day. For some nutrients you may need more or less than 100% DV.

The High and Low of Daily Values

- 5 percent or less is low—try to aim low in total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium
- 20 percent or more is high—try to aim high in vitamins, minerals and fiber

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 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	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

For more food label information, visit the Food and Drug Administration at www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers

Limit Fat, Cholesterol and Sodium

Eating less of these nutrients may help reduce your risk for heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer:

- Total fat includes saturated, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat. Limit to 100% DV or less per day.
- Saturated fat and trans fat are linked to an increased risk of heart disease.
- Sodium—high levels can add up to high blood pressure.
- Remember to aim low for % DV of these nutrients.

Get Enough Vitamins, Minerals and Fiber

- Eat more fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron to maintain good health and help reduce your risk of certain health problems such as osteoporosis and anemia.
- Choose more fruits and vegetables to get more of these nutrients.
- Remember to aim high for % DV of these nutrients.

Additional Nutrients

- Carbohydrates—There are three types of carbohydrates: sugars, starches and fiber. Select whole-grain breads, cereals, rice and pasta plus fruits and vegetables.
- Sugars—simple carbohydrates or sugars occur naturally in foods such as fruit juice (fructose), or come from refined sources such as table sugar (sucrose) or corn syrup.

Check the Ingredient List

Foods with more than one ingredient must have an ingredient list on the label. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight. Those in the largest amounts are listed first. Effective January 2006, manufacturers are required to clearly state if food products contain any ingredients that contain protein derived from the eight major allergenic foods. These foods are milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat and soybeans.

What Health Claims on Food Labels Really Mean

FDA has strict guidelines on how certain food label terms can be used. Some of the most common claims seen on food packages:

- **Low calorie**—Less than 40 calories per serving.
- **Low cholesterol**—Less than 20 mg of cholesterol and 2 gm or less of saturated fat per serving.
- **Reduced**—25% less of the specified nutrient or calories than the usual product.
- **Good source of**—Provides at least 10% of the DV of a particular vitamin or nutrient per serving.
- **Calorie free**—Less than 5 calories per serving.
- **Fat free / sugar free**—Less than ½ gram of fat or sugar per serving.
- **Low sodium**—Less than 140 mg of sodium per serving.
- **High in**—Provides 20% or more of the Daily Value of a specified nutrient per serving.
- **High fiber**—5 or more grams of fiber per serving.

FDA also sets standards for health-related claims on food labels to help consumers identify foods that are rich in nutrients and may help to reduce their risk for certain diseases. For example, health claims may highlight the link between calcium and osteoporosis, fiber and calcium, heart disease and fat or high blood pressure and sodium.

For a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist and for additional food and nutrition information visit www.eatright.org.



The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving the public's health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

This tip sheet is provided by:

Authored by registered dietitian nutritionists on staff with the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
Sources: US Food and Drug Administration, ADA Complete Food & Nutrition Guide