



How Do I Read “Nutrition Facts” Labels?

When you go grocery shopping, take the time to read the nutrition facts labels on the food you purchase. Compare nutrients and calories in one food to those in another. The information may surprise you. Make sure that you aren't buying foods high in saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium and added sugars!



How do I read the nutrition facts label?

Most foods in the grocery store have a nutrition label and list of ingredients. Claims like “low cholesterol” and “fat free” can be used only if a food meets standards set by the government.

The “Nutrition Facts” label contains this information:

- **Serving Size** — If you eat double the serving size listed, you need to double the calories, fat and nutrients. If you eat half the size shown, cut the calories and nutrients in half.
- **Calories** — This is very helpful to know if you're cutting calories to lose weight or want to manage your weight.
- **Total Fat** — Most people need to cut back on calories! Fat has more than double the number of calories per gram (9 calories vs. 4 calories) than carbohydrates and protein. Cutting back on fat can help you cut back on calories. Your goal is an overall intake of no more than 25 to 35 percent of your total calories from fat. You should keep track of the amount of calories you consume and the amount of calories you burn.
- **Saturated Fat** — This is one part of the total fat in food. It's a key nutrient that raises your blood cholesterol and your risk of heart disease and stroke. Limit your saturated fat intake to less than 7 percent of your total calories.
- **Trans Fat** — This fat is also part of the total fat. It raises blood cholesterol and your risk of heart disease. Choose foods with “0” grams of Trans fat. Limit your trans fat intake to less than 1 percent of your total calories.
- **Cholesterol** — Too much of it in your diet may lead to too much in your blood. And, too much cholesterol in your blood can lead to heart disease and stroke. It's best to eat less than 300 mg each day. People with heart disease, high LDL cholesterol levels or who are taking cholesterol-lowering medication should consume less than 200 mg of cholesterol per day.
- **Sodium** — Watch for both natural and added sodium in food products. Ordinary table salt is sodium chloride—40 percent sodium by weight. Healthy adults should take in less than 1,500 mg of sodium each day. That's equal to a little more than ½ tsp. of salt.

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- **Total Carbohydrates** — Choose fruits and vegetables, and fiber rich whole-grain breads and cereals.
- **Dietary Fiber** — Fruits, vegetables, fiber-rich whole grains, peas and beans are good sources and can help reduce the risk of heart disease.
- **Sugars** – The amount listed includes both sugars that occur naturally in foods, such as fruit and milk, and sugars that are added to foods, such as soft drinks and other sweetened foods and beverages. Look at the ingredient list and make sure that “added sugars,” such as, sucrose, fructose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, high-fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, evaporated/dried cane juice, concentrated fruit juice, and honey are not one of the first four ingredients.
- **Protein** — Where there’s animal protein, there’s also fat and cholesterol. Eat small portions or animal protein.
- **Vitamins and Minerals** — Eating a variety of foods will help you reach your daily goal of 100 percent of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron.



- **Daily Value** — The daily values are guides for people who eat 2,000 calories each day. If you eat more or less than that, your daily value may be higher or lower. Choose foods with a low percent daily value of fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol and sodium. Try to reach 100 percent of the daily value of, dietary fiber, vitamins and minerals.

HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 **Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals.** If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It’s very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease.
- 3 For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How many saturated fat grams should I have each day?

How many calories should I eat?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!

