

Reading Food Nutrition Labels

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Learning how to read and understand food labels can help you make healthier choices.

Here are some tips for making the most of the information on the Nutrition Facts label:



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 slice (47g)
Servings Per Container 6

Amount Per Serving

	% Daily Value*
Calories 160	Calories from Fat 90
Total Fat 10g	15%
Saturated Fat 2.5g	11%
Trans Fat 2g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	12%
Total Carb 15g	5%
Dietary Fiber less than 1g	3%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium 45%	Iron 6%
Thiamin 8%	Riboflavin 6%
Niacin 6%	

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Start here - Serving Size and Servings Per Container

Check the total calories per serving - Total Calories and Calories from Fat

Limit these nutrients - Total Fat, Saturated Fat, Trans Fat, Cholesterol, Sodium, Total Carb

Get enough of these nutrients - Dietary Fiber, Sugars, Protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium, Iron, Thiamin, Riboflavin, Niacin

Quick Guide to % Daily Value: 5% or less is low, 20% or more is high

Start here. Note the size of a single serving and how many servings are in the package.

Check total calories per serving. Look at the serving size and how many servings you're really consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories and nutrients, including the Percent Daily Value (% DV).

Limit these nutrients. Remember, you need to limit your total fat to no more than 56–78 grams a day — including no more than 16 grams of saturated fat, less than two grams of trans fat, and less than 300 mg cholesterol (for a 2,000 calorie diet).

Get enough of these nutrients. Make sure you get 100 percent of the fiber, vitamins and other nutrients you need every day.

Quick guide to % DV. The % DV section tells you the percent of each nutrient in a single serving, in terms of the daily recommended amount. As a guide, if you want to consume less of a nutrient (such as saturated fat, cholesterol or sodium), choose foods with a lower % DV — 5 percent or less is low. If you want to consume more of a nutrient (such as fiber), seek foods with a higher % DV — 20 percent or more is high.

Here are more tips for getting as much health information as possible from the Nutrition Facts label:

- Remember that the information shown in these panels is based on 2,000 calories a day. You may need to consume less or more than 2,000 calories depending upon your age, gender, activity level, and whether you're trying to lose, gain or maintain your weight. Find out your personal daily limits on [My Fats Translator](#).
- In general, as you think about the amount of calories in a food per serving, remember that for a 2,000-calorie diet:
 - 40 calories per serving is considered low;
 - 100 calories per serving is considered moderate; and
 - 400 calories or more per serving is considered high.
- There is no % DV shown for *trans* fat on the panel because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not have enough scientific information to set this value. We recommend eating less than 20 calories or

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(less than two grams of *trans* fat) a day – that's less than 1 percent of your total daily calories (for a 2,000-calorie-a-day diet).

- When the Nutrition Facts panel says the food contains "0 g" of *trans* fat, it means the food contains less than 0.5 grams of *trans* fat **per serving**.
- When the Nutrition Facts label says a food contains "0 g" of *trans* fat, but includes "partially hydrogenated oil" in the ingredient list, it means the food contains *trans* fat, but less than 0.5 grams of *trans* fat per serving. So, if you eat more than one serving, you could quickly reach your daily limit of *trans* fat.

In addition to the Nutrition Facts label, a lot of foods today also come with nutrient content claims provided by the manufacturer. These claims are typically featured in ads for the foods or in the promotional copy on the food packages themselves. They are strictly defined by the FDA. The chart below provides some of the most commonly used nutrient content claims, along with a detailed description of what the claim means.

If a food claims to be...	It means that one serving of the product contains...
Calorie free	Less than 5 calories
Sugar free	Less than 0.5 grams of sugar
Fat	
Fat free	Less than 0.5 grams of fat
Low fat	3 grams of fat or less
Reduced fat or less fat	At least 25 percent less fat than the regular product
Low in saturated fat	1 gram of saturated fat or less, with not more than 15 percent of the calories coming from saturated fat
Lean	Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol
Extra lean	Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol
Light (lite)	At least one-third fewer calories or no more than half the fat of the regular product, or no more than half the sodium of the regular product
Cholesterol	
Cholesterol free	Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams (or less) of saturated fat
Low cholesterol	20 or fewer milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat
Reduced cholesterol	At least 25 percent less cholesterol than the regular product and 2 grams or less of saturated fat
Sodium	
Sodium free or no sodium	Less than 5 milligrams of sodium and no sodium chloride in ingredients
Very low sodium	35 milligrams or less of sodium
Low sodium	140 milligrams or less of sodium
Reduced or less sodium	At least 25 percent less sodium than the regular product
Fiber	
High fiber	5 grams or more of fiber
Good source of fiber	2.5 to 4.9 grams of fiber

If you can't remember the definitions of all of the terms, don't worry. You can use these general guidelines instead:

- "Free" means a food has the least possible amount of the specified nutrient.
- "Very Low" and "Low" means the food has a little more than foods labeled "Free."
- "Reduced" or "Less" mean the food has 25 percent less of a specific nutrient than the regular version of the food.

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