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## **Make the Nutrition Facts Label a Tool You Know How to Use**

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*The Nutrition Facts label is an important tool to use. Consumers are more likely to make healthy food & beverages choices, if the Nutrition Facts label is understood. In this lesson, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration will: help consumers better understand the Nutrition Facts label, identify nutrients we need less of & those we need more of, and give 3 tips to make healthier choices.*

### **Objectives:**

1. Understand key terms on the Nutrition Facts Label
2. Identify nutrients most Americans need more of & less of
3. Gain 3 tips for making healthier food & beverage choice

## **Introduction –**

Understanding the NEW nutrition facts label is important to make healthy food/beverage purchases if your food comes with a label.

Before we look at the label, let's go over some history of the nutrition facts label.

**1990:** Nutrition Labeling and Education Act passed - *It was signed into law on November 8, 1990 by President George H. W. Bush. The law gives the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority to require nutrition labeling of most foods regulated by the Agency; and to require that all nutrient content claims (for example, 'high fiber', 'low fat', etc.) and health claims meet FDA regulations.*

**1993:** Nutrition Facts label required on packaged foods

**2006:** *Trans* fat declaration required

**2014:** Proposed rule to update the Nutrition Facts label

**2016:** Final rule to update the Nutrition Facts label

**Jan. 1, 2020:** Compliance with updated label for large manufactures (annual sales of \$10 million or more)

**Jan. 1, 2021:** compliance with updated label for small manufactures (annual sales of \$10 million or less)

Let's also take a moment to define a few key terms.

A **calorie** is a unit used to measure the energy content of foods and beverages. Our bodies need energy to function, grow, and thrive.

A **nutrient** is a substance in food that our body uses to function and grow. We get nutrients from what we eat and drink. Fats, carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, minerals, and water are all examples of nutrients. Fats, carbohydrates and proteins also supply calories to the foods and beverages that you eat and drink.

**Percent Daily Value** tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of the food contributes to a total daily diet. It can also help you determine if a serving of the food is high or low in a nutrient and to compare food products. You'll find both calories and Percent Daily Value useful terms to know when using the label to compare food products.

The Nutrition Facts label is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and is required on most food and beverage packages. It provides important information about the nutritional content of foods and beverages.

The label generally is found on food and beverage packaging and containers such as boxes, bags, bottles, and cans.

Again, the Nutrition Facts label is important because it can help us make informed decisions about the foods and beverages we consume – decisions that promote good nutrition and good health.

Now, let's take a close look at the NEW & Improved Nutrition Facts label!

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
	<b>% Daily Value*</b>
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

*(For educational purposes only. These labels do not meet the labeling requirements described in 21 CFR 101.9.)*

Starting at the top. The first line tells you the servings per container, which is the total number of servings in the entire food package or container. It's common for one package of food to contain more than one serving.

#### SERVING SIZE:

The second line is serving size. The serving size is based on the amount of food people typically eat at one time and is NOT a recommendation of how much you should eat.

The nutrition information listed on the Nutrition Facts label is based on the serving size listed on the label, and, if there is a second column based on the amount per package, that column of nutrition information will be based on the entire package the entire package.

Serving size is shown as a common household measure that is appropriate to the food (such as cup, tablespoon, piece, slice, or jar), followed by the metric amount. When comparing calories and nutrients in different foods, always check the serving size to make an accurate comparison.

#### AMOUNT OF CALORIES:

Calories refer to the total number of calories, or "energy," supplied from all sources (fat, carbohydrate, protein, and alcohol) in a serving of the food.

To achieve or maintain a healthy weight, balance the number of calories you eat and drink with the number of calories your body uses. 2,000 calories a day is used as a *general guide* for

nutrition advice. Your calorie needs may be higher or lower and vary depending on your age, sex, height, weight, and level of physical activity. Later, you'll learn how to find out your personal calorie needs.

#### PERCENT DAILY VALUE:

Next, we have the Percent Daily Value. Percent Daily Value, or percent DV, shows how much a nutrient in a serving of the food contributes to a total daily diet. Use the %DV to determine if a serving of the food is high or low in an individual nutrient and to compare food products – ***but make sure the serving size is the same.***

As a general guide:

5% DV or less of a nutrient per serving is considered low

20% DV or more of a nutrient per serving is considered high

Please note, some nutrients, such as protein and *trans* fat, on the Nutrition Facts label do not have a %DV, so use the number of grams as a guide.

#### NUTRIENTS:

The label lists the different nutrients contained in the food product. Use this section of the label to help choose products that are lower in nutrients you want to get less of and higher in nutrients you want to get more of.

Nutrients to get less of include saturated fat, *trans* fat, sodium, and added sugars. Most Americans exceed the recommended limits for these nutrients—and diets higher in these nutrients are associated with an increased risk of developing some health conditions (such as cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure).

Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV of these nutrients each day. Note: *Trans* fat does not have a %DV. So, use the number of grams for comparison and keep the intake of *trans* fat as low as possible.

Nutrients to get more of include dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.

#### ADDED SUGARS:

Another listed nutrient is Added Sugar, so what are “Added Sugars”?

Added sugars includes sugars that are either added during the processing of foods, or are packaged as such (for example, a bag of table sugar), sugars from syrups and honey, and sugars from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices. It also includes sugars that you may add to your diet such as syrup on pancakes or sugar in your tea or coffee.

Nutrients to get LESS of:

Most Americans exceed the recommended limits for saturated fat, *trans* fat, sodium, and added sugars, therefore we want to get LESS of them —as diets higher in these nutrients are associated with an increased risk of developing some health conditions (such as cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure).

Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV of these nutrients each day.

Note: *Trans* fat does not have a %DV. So, use the number of grams for comparison and keep the intake of *trans* fat as low as possible.

Nutrients to get MORE of:

Many Americans do not get the recommended amounts of dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium. Compare and choose foods to get 100% DV of these nutrients on most days.

### **Conclusion -**

The FDA's Nutrition Facts label is your daily tool for good nutrition. The new label features:

- Servings size in bolder font.
- Updated serving sizes.
- Calories in larger font.
- Updated daily values.
- Added Sugars.
- Changes in required nutrients with actual amounts.
- And a new and easier-to-understand footnote that better explains percent Daily Value.

Here are 3 tips when using the Nutrition Facts label to make healthy choices.

1. Check the Servings
2. Know your Calorie Needs
3. Use % Daily Value as a Guide

Handout – “Use the Nutrition Facts Label to make Healthy Choices: 3 TIPS” source from:

[www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

**Activity:** Supplies: several food products with labels; pass out the food products for participants to look at, while looking at the Nutrition Facts label – go through the *3 tips to making healthy choices*, 1. Check the Servings, 2. Know your Calorie Needs, and 3. Use % Daily Value as a Guide and have the participants share their findings on the label and state whether the food product they are looking at would be a ‘healthy choice’ for them.

### **Additional References:**

Handout: “Understanding and Using the Nutrition Facts Label” March 2020

[www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation](http://www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation)

YouTube Video: “New U.S. FDA Food Labeling Rules” by Registrar Corp February 2018

<https://youtu.be/a4dmxIphpo8>

Research Resource:

U.S. Food and Drug Administration [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)

Choose MyPlate [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)



# Understanding and Using the Nutrition Facts Label



The **Nutrition Facts** label found on packaged foods and beverages is your **daily tool** for making informed food choices that contribute to healthy lifelong healthy eating habits.

4 servings per container	
Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>240</b>
Amount per serving	
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 4g	5%
<i>Trans Fat</i> 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 5mg	2%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 46g	17%
Total Sugars 4g	
<b>Protein</b> 11g	
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

**Servings Per Container** shows the **total number of servings** in the entire food package or container. One package of food may contain more than one serving.

**Serving Size** is based on the **amount of food that is customarily eaten at one time** and is not a recommendation of how much to eat. The nutrition information listed on the label is usually based on one serving of the food; however, some containers may also have information displayed per package.

**Calories** refer to the **total number of calories** in a serving of the food. To achieve or maintain a healthy body weight, balance the number of calories you eat and drink with the number of calories your body uses. 2,000 calories a day is used as a general guide for nutrition advice. Learn your number at [www.choosemyplate.gov/resources/MyPlatePlan](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/resources/MyPlatePlan).

#### As a general guide:

- **100 calories** per serving of an individual packaged food is considered **moderate**
- **400 calories** or more per serving of an individual packaged food is considered **high**

**% Daily Value (%DV)** shows **how much of a nutrient in a serving of the food contributes to a total daily diet**. Use %DV to determine if a serving of the food is high or low in an individual nutrient and to compare food products (remember to make sure the serving size is the same).

#### As a general guide:

- **5% DV** or less of a nutrient per serving is considered **low**
- **20% DV** or more of a nutrient per serving is considered **high**

## Nutrients

The Nutrition Facts label can help you **learn about, compare, and monitor the nutrients** in many foods in your diet.

**Nutrients to get less of: saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.** Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV of these nutrients each day.

**Nutrients to get more of: dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.** Compare and choose foods to get 100% DV of these nutrients on most days.

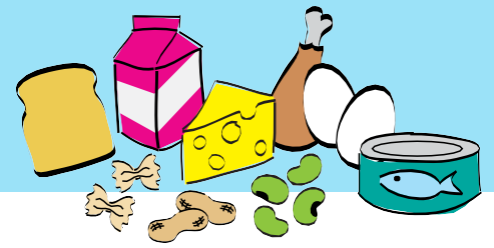


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[www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation](http://www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation)



# Action Steps For a Healthy Diet



Use the Nutrition Facts label and other parts of the food label to help you make healthy food choices.

- **Eat a variety of colorful vegetables** (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and 100% vegetable juices. Buy frozen (without butter or sauce) and low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables. Try vegetables as snacks, salads, side dishes, and as part of main dishes.
- **Focus on whole fruits** (fresh, frozen, dried, and canned in 100% fruit juice). Try fruits as snacks and desserts and add fruits to salads and side dishes. Use fruit to top foods like cereal, pancakes, and yogurt instead of other sweet toppings.
- **Make at least half your grains whole grains.** Look for foods with a whole grain listed as the first or second grain ingredient after water. Try whole grains (such as brown rice, couscous, and quinoa) as side dishes and switch from refined to whole grain versions of commonly consumed foods (such as breads, cereals, pasta, and rice). Limit refined grains and products made with refined grains, especially those high in calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and/or sodium (such as cakes, cookies, chips, and crackers).
- **Vary your protein routine.** Try beans and peas, fat-free or 1% low-fat dairy products, eggs, lean meats and poultry, seafood, soy products, nuts, and seeds. Choose seafood and plant sources of protein (such as soy products, beans, peas, and unsalted nuts and seeds) in place of some meats and poultry. Add beans or peas to salads, soups, and side dishes—or serve them as a main dish. Try a small handful of unsalted nuts or seeds as snacks.
- **Substitute fat-free or 1% low-fat dairy products** (such as milk, cheese, and yogurt) and fortified plant-based beverages (such as soy, rice, and almond) for whole and 2% reduced-fat dairy products. Limit dairy desserts that are high in calories, saturated fat, and added sugars (such as ice cream, other frozen desserts, and puddings).

- **Limit saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.** Choose fresh meats, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed. Switch from stick margarine to soft margarine (liquid, spray, or tub). Look for light, low sodium, reduced sodium, or no-salt-added versions of packaged foods, snacks, and condiments. Limit baked goods, desserts, sweets, and snack foods (such as cakes, cookies, ice cream, chocolate candies, chips, and microwave popcorn). Consume smaller portions of foods and beverages that are higher in saturated fat, sodium, and/or added sugars, or consume them less often.

## Helpful Meal Preparation Tips

- Try baking, broiling, grilling, or steaming. These cooking methods do not add extra calories.
- Trim or drain fat from meats before or after cooking and remove poultry skin before eating.
- Cook and bake with liquid oils (such as canola and olive oil) instead of solid fats (such as butter and shortening).
- Prepare your own food when you can and limit packaged sauces and flavored products (such as rice and pasta mixes).
- Limit the amount of salt and sugar you add when cooking, baking, or eating.
- Flavor foods with herbs and spices and no-salt seasoning instead of salt.
- Rinse sodium-containing canned foods, such as tuna, vegetables, and beans before eating.
- When eating out, ask how your food is being prepared. You can also ask if nutrition information is available to help you make informed choices.

# USE THE NUTRITION FACTS LABEL TO MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES: 3 TIPS



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## Check the Servings.

1

The nutrition information listed on the label is usually based on one serving of the food. When comparing calories and nutrients in different foods, check the serving size to make a correct comparison.

And remember, it is common for a food package or beverage to have more than one serving.

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## Know Your Calorie Needs.

2

2,000 calories a day is used as a general guide for nutrition advice. However, your calorie needs may be higher or lower and depend on your age, sex, height, weight, and the amount of physical activity you get each day. Talk to your healthcare provider about your calorie and nutrition needs, as you age.

Visit [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/MyPlatePlan](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/MyPlatePlan) and talk to your healthcare provider to see what calorie range is right for you.

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## Use % Daily Value as a Guide.

3

The %DV can help you look for foods to decide which is the better choice for you.

Older adults should more often look for foods with a higher %DV of dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, and potassium. Older adults should also more often look for foods with a lower %DV of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Talk to your healthcare provider about which nutrients you should track closely for your overall health.

To learn more about the Nutrition Facts label, go to: [www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation](http://www.fda.gov/nutritioneducation)