

Quick Tips for Reading Food Labels

Serving Size: All the information on a food label is based on the serving size. Be careful—one serving may be much smaller than you think. Compare what you eat to the serving size on the label.

Servings per Container: This is the suggested number of servings in the package or container. For example if the package has six servings per container and you eat half of the bag, you would be eating 3 servings. It is important to look at these numbers because you may be eating more than you think!

Calories: Most women need to eat about 1,600 – 1,800 calories per day, with no more than 30 percent (about 480 calories) from total fat. Active women need more calories, up to 2,200 per day (no more than 660 calories from total fat).**

% Daily Value (%DV): This tells you whether a food is high or low in nutrients. Foods that have more than 20 percent daily value (20% DV) of a nutrient are high. Foods that have 5 percent daily value (5% DV) or less are low.

***TIP:** You can use the Nutrition Facts label not only to help limit those nutrients you want to cut back on but also to increase those nutrients you need to consume in greater amounts.*

Total Fat: This is the total fat per one serving in grams and in % Daily Value. Choose food items with less fat.

Saturated Fat: Saturated fat is not healthy for your heart. Compare labels on similar foods and try to choose foods that have a 5% DV or less or with 2 grams or less for saturated fat.

Trans Fat: Trans fat is not healthy for your heart. When reading food labels, add together the grams (g) of Trans fat and saturated fat, and choose foods with the lowest combined amount. If a food product has the words “partially hydrogenated oil” on the label it contains Trans fats.

Cholesterol: Too much cholesterol is not healthy for your heart. Keep your intake of saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol as low as possible. Cholesterol is found in organ meats, dairy products, shrimp, and egg yolks.

Sodium: Salt contains sodium. High sodium intake is linked to higher blood pressure. Foods that contain more than 20% DV are high in sodium. Look for labels that say "sodium-free" or "low sodium." Foods that are low in sodium contain no more than 5% DV.

***TIP:** Many food labels say "low-fat," "reduced fat," or "light." That does not always mean the food is low in calories. Remember, fat free does not mean calorie free and calories do count!*

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
Sol 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

Fiber: Choose foods that are rich in fiber, such as whole grains, fruits, and vegetables.
Sugars: Try to choose foods with little or no added sugar (like low-sugar cereals).
Vitamins and Minerals: The goal is to consume 100% of each of these nutrients daily.
Calcium: Choose foods that are high in calcium. Foods that are high in calcium have at least 20% DV.

Sources: Adapted from Weight-control Information Network June 2004. (The Weight-control Information Network (WIN) is a service of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases of the National Institutes of Health, which is the Federal Government's lead agency responsible for biomedical research on nutrition and obesity); USFDA; and McKinley Health Center/University of Illinois.

What are Daily Values etc.?

What Are the Daily Values?

Feel like you're drowning in numbers? Let the Daily Values be your guide. Daily values are on the nutrition label. They are a guide for healthy eating and replace the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances.

Is the Daily Value Right for Me?

Daily values are listed for people who eat 2,000 or 2,500 calories each day. If you need to eat less, your personal daily value may be lower. If you need to eat more, your personal daily value may be higher.

How to Use the Daily Values

The percent (%) Daily Value is a useful tool to check whether a food is high or low in a certain nutrient such as fat or fiber.

For total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium, choose foods with a low % Daily Value. For total carbohydrates, dietary fiber, vitamins and minerals, your daily value goal is to reach 100 percent of each. Don't count on one food to do it all. Let a combination of foods add up.

Nutrient	Daily Value (Based on 2,000 calories)	Daily Value (Based on 2,500 calories)
Total Fat	Less than 65 grams	Less than 80 grams
Saturated Fat	Less than 20 grams	Less than 25 grams
Cholesterol	Less than 300 milligrams	Less than 300 milligrams
Total Carbohydrate	Less than 300 grams	Less than 375 grams
Sodium	Less than 2400 milligrams	Less than 2400 milligrams
Fiber	25 grams	30 grams

Sources: American Heart Association, USFDA, American Diabetes Association.