

The **FACTS** about **NUTRITION LABELS**

The front of food packages are designed to catch your attention. This is why it is important to know how to read nutrition labels. This will help you to make informed decisions about what you eat.

Steps to reading labels:

1 Does this grow in nature?

Foods that grow from the ground or found living in nature are called whole foods. They are better for your body than processed foods.

2 Read the ingredients list

- Less than 10 ingredients is best
- Avoid ingredient words that you cannot pronounce or have no idea what they are



Ingredients List

Look for:

- Short list of ingredients (10 or less is best)
- Good words: whole grain, organic, etc.
- First in the list means *most* in the food
- Words you can pronounce
- High - Protein & High - Fiber
- Low sugar

Example: Ingredients List from a Storebought Granola

Dates, Organic Bananas, Walnuts, Sunflower Seeds, Pumpkin Seeds, Dry Roasted Cashews (Cashews, Sea Salt), Pecans, Cinnamon, Vanilla Bean

Avoid:

- Long list of ingredients (10 or more)
- High fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oil, artificial flavors and colors
- Food additives (see handout)

Example: Ingredients List from a Popular Breakfast Pastry

Enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, vitamin B1 [thiamin mononitrate], vitamin B2 [riboflavin], folic acid), corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, soybean and palm oil (with TBHQ for freshness), sugar, dextrose, contains two percent or less of modified corn starch, salt, cornstarch, cream, leavening (baking soda, sodium acid pyrophosphate, monocalcium phosphate), strawberry powder, hydrogenated palm kernel oil, soy lecithin, gelatin, color added, natural and artificial flavors, xanthan gum, DATEM, strawberry juice concentrate, red 40, yellow 5, yellow 6, blue 1, carnauba wax, blue 2.

Note: when reading ingredients lists, keep in mind that products can have multiple names.

For example:

- Sugar, aka: fructose, sucrose, lactose
- MSG, aka: hydrolyzed vegetable protein, sodium caseinate

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Nutrition Facts	
Calories	240
Total Fat 8g	
Saturated Fat 3g	
Trans Fat* 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	
Sodium 160mg	
Total Carbohydrate 37g	
Dietary Fiber 4g	
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	
Calcium 260mg	
Iron 8mg	
Potassium 240mg	

Look at the nutrition facts

Nutrition Facts

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories 230	
	% Daily Value
Eat less of these	Total Fat 8g 10%
	Saturated Fat 3g 5%
	Trans Fat* 0g 0%
	Cholesterol 0mg 0%
Get lots of these	Sodium 160mg 7%
	Total Carbohydrate 37g 13%
	Dietary Fiber 4g 14%
	Total Sugars 12g 20% Includes 10g Added Sugars
	Protein 3g
	Vitamin D 2mcg 10%
	Calcium 260mg 20%
	Iron 8mg 15%
	Potassium 240mg 6%

Start Here! (points to Serving Size)

5% or less is low, 20% or more is high

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.

*Trans fat has detrimental health effects and is not essential in the diet. Fully hydrogenated oils and refined vegetable oils contain very low levels of trans fat. Hydrogenated oils are used by food manufacturers to improve the texture, shelf life, and flavor stability of foods. (fda.gov)

Check the serving size and servings per container

- There is often more than one serving per package
- More than 1 serving increases the other values

Eat less!

- Less than 6 grams of sugar
- Check the sodium. Low sodium is often noted as less than 140 mg per serving.

Eat more!

- 3 or more grams of protein
- 3 or more grams of fiber

% Daily Value is the amount of each of these things your body needs daily

Note that these values are based on a 2000 calorie per day diet.

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Try not to get overwhelmed

- Read labels at the store
- Add whole foods like fruit, vegetables, seeds, and nuts
- Replace one meal a day with a healthier alternative
- Start with removing just one additive from your diet at a time, like high fructose corn syrup



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