

Understanding Food Labels

Label Reading for Better Eating

Serving sizes are in common household measurements.

Serving sizes are the same for similar products.

Nutrition Panel:
The nutrients required to appear on the nutrition panel are those most important to the health of people today.

Ingredients are listed in descending order.
Main ingredient is listed first.
Smallest ingredient is listed last.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 3/4 Cup (170g)
Servings Per Container: 4

Amount Per Serving (as prepared)

Calories 289 **Calories from fat 117**

% Daily Value *

Total Fat 13g **20%**

Saturated Fat 5g **25%**

Cholesterol 30mg **10%**

Sodium 530mg **22%**

Total Carbohydrate 34g **12%**

Dietary Fiber 0g **0%**

Sugars 5g

Protein 9g

Vitamin A 2%

Vitamin C 2%

Calcium 8%

Iron 10%

* 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	
Sat 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	

Ingredients: Enriched Macaroni (Flour, Niacin, Ferrous Sulfate, Thiamin Mono-nitrate, Riboflavin); Cheese Sauce Mix (Whey, Dehydrated Cheese [Granular and Cheddar (Milk, Cheese Culture, Salt Enzymes)], Whey Protein Concentrate, Skim Milk, Buttermilk, Sodium Tripolyphosphate, Sodium Phosphate, Citric Acid, Yellow 5 (Color) Yellow 6 (Color), Lactic Acid.

% Daily Value shows how a food fits into overall daily diet.

These numbers can help you avoid eating too much fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium.

These numbers can help you get enough dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron.

Daily Values are based on recommended nutrient intakes when eating 2,000 calories per day. Daily Values are also listed for persons eating 2,500 calories per day.

PACKAGE A

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 1 Cup (25g)

Servings Per Container: 10

Amount Per Serving (as prepared)

Calories 97 **Calories from fat 16**

	% Daily Value *
Total Fat 2g	3%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 231mg	10%
Total Carbohydrate 18g	6%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A	22%
Vitamin C	22%
Calcium	4%
Iron	2%

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

Ingredients: Whole Oat Flour (Includes the Oat Bran), Wheat Starch, Sugar, Salt, Calcium Carbonate (Provides Calcium), Trisodium Phosphate, Vitamin C (Sodium Ascorbate), Iron (A Mineral Nutrient), A B Vitamin (Niacin), Vitamin A (Palmitate), Vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin), Vitamin B1 (Thiamin Mononitrate), A B Vitamin (Folic Acid), and Vitamin D.

PACKAGE B

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 1 Cup (32g)

Servings Per Container: 10

Amount Per Serving (as prepared)

Calories 125 **Calories from fat 9**

	% Daily Value *
Total Fat 1g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 227mg	9%
Total Carbohydrate 26g	9%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 14g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A	22%
Vitamin C	22%
Calcium	4%
Iron	22%

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

Ingredients: Sugar, Corn Flour, Marshmallows (Sugar, Corn Syrup, Dextrose, Modified Food Starch, Gelatin, Artificial and Natural Flavor, artificial color), oat flour, wheat flour, Hydrogenated Coconut and Palm Kernel Oil, Salt, Natural and Artificial Flavor (with BHA added to Preserve Freshness) and Artificial Color (Including yellow 5). BHT is added to Packaging Material to Preserve Freshness.

Questions:

How many servings are in package A? _____

How much total fat is in one serving of the food in package A? _____

Which food is lower in total fat, the food in package A or the food in package B? _____

Which food has more fiber, the food in package A or the food in package B? _____

Adapted from "Label Reading for Better Eating" and "Comparing the Labels" in "Stretching Your Food Dollars" from the University of Wisconsin Extension.

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Sample label for
Macaroni & Cheese

Nutrition Facts

① **Start Here** →

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

② **Check Calories**

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110

% Daily Value*

③ **Limit these
Nutrients**

Total Fat 12g **18%**

Saturated Fat 3g **15%**

Trans Fat 3g

Cholesterol 30mg **10%**

Sodium 470mg **20%**

Total Carbohydrate 31g **10%**

Dietary Fiber 0g **0%**

Sugars 5g

Protein 5g

④ **Get Enough
of these
Nutrients**

Vitamin A **4%**

Vitamin C **2%**

Calcium **20%**

Iron **4%**

⑤ **Footnote**

* 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
Sat 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

You will see this
footnote on larger food
packages. It always
looks the same. It is
guidelines for a
healthful diet.

⑥

**Quick Guide
to % DV**

• 5% or less
is Low

• 20% or more
is High

USE THE NUTRITION FACTS LABEL TO EAT HEALTHIER

Check the serving size and number of servings.

- The Nutrition Facts label information is based on ONE serving, but many packages contain more. Look at the serving size and how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories and nutrients, including the % DVs.
- When you compare calories and nutrients between brands, check to see if the serving size is the same.

Calories count, so pay attention to the amount.

- This is where you'll find the number of calories per serving and the calories from fat in each serving.
- Fat-free doesn't mean calorie-free. Lower fat items may have as many calories as full-fat versions.
- If the label lists that 1 serving equals 3 cookies and 100 calories, and you eat 6 cookies, you've eaten 2 servings, or twice the number of calories and fat.

Look for foods that are rich in these nutrients:

- Use the label not only to limit fat and sodium, but also to increase nutrients that promote good health and may protect you from disease.
- Some Americans don't get enough vitamins A and C, potassium, calcium, and iron, so choose the brand with the higher % DV for these nutrients.
- Get the most nutrition for your calories—compare the calories to the nutrients you would be getting to make a healthier food choice.

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 3g

Cholesterol 30mg 10%

Sodium 470mg 20%

Potassium 700mg 20%

Total Carbohydrate 31g 10%

Dietary Fiber 0g 0%

Sugars 5g

Protein 5g

Vitamin A 4%

Vitamin C 2%

Calcium 20%

Iron 4%

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Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

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Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

The % Daily Value is a key to a balanced diet.

The % DV is a general guide to help you link nutrients in a serving of food to their contribution to your total daily diet. It can help you determine if a food is high or low in a nutrient—5% or less is low, 20% or more is high. You can use the % DV to make dietary trade-offs with other foods throughout the day. The * is a reminder that the % DV is based on a 2,000-calorie diet. You may need more or less, but the % DV is still a helpful gauge.

Know your fats and reduce sodium for your health.

- To help reduce your risk of heart disease, use the label to select foods that are lowest in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.
- Trans fat doesn't have a % DV, but consume as little as possible because it increases your risk of heart disease.
- The % DV for total fat includes all different kinds of fats.
- To help lower blood cholesterol, replace saturated and trans fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats found in fish, nuts, and liquid vegetable oils.
- Limit sodium to help reduce your risk of high blood pressure.

Reach for healthy, wholesome carbohydrates.

- Fiber and sugars are types of carbohydrates. Healthy sources, like fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains can reduce the risk of heart disease and improve digestive functioning.
- Whole grain foods can't always be identified by color or name, such as multi-grain or wheat. Look for the 'whole' grain listed first in the ingredient list, such as whole wheat, brown rice, or whole oats.
- There isn't a % DV for sugar but you can compare the sugar content in grains among products.
- Limit foods with added sugars (sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn or maple syrup), which add calories but not other nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals. Make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few items in the ingredients list.

For protein, choose foods that are lower in fat.

- Most Americans get plenty of protein, but not always from the healthiest sources.
- When choosing a food for its protein content, such as meat, poultry, dry beans, milk and milk products, make choices that are lean, low-fat, or fat free.