

Decoding “Nutrition Facts” Labels

Good information helps you make good choices!

1. Serving size and Servings per container - This can be tricky because it’s not always the same portion size that people usually consume. Keep that in mind when you’re reading step 2...

2. Total Calories per serving - This is how many calories are in a serving. Calories are units of energy. More calories mean more fuel for activity. If you’re not burning up the fuel you’ve consumed, it gets stored for later use —as body fat.

3. Total fat - This total includes both unhealthy and healthy fats. Too much saturated and trans fats can increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. Try to choose foods with lower amounts. Healthy fat is protective but remember: it’s also high in calories (energy).

4. Sodium - This word is often used interchangeably with the word “salt.” Too much sodium can mean too much fluid inside your blood vessels. This puts an extra burden on your heart and blood vessels and can raise your blood pressure. Beware: not all food that’s high in sodium tastes salty.

5. Total Carbohydrates - Includes sugars, starches, and fibers. Go for the higher fiber options whenever possible, and avoid added sugars when you can.

6. Protein - Most Americans get plenty without special “high-protein” extras like powders or bars. Remember: animal protein has saturated fat. Add more plant-based protein options such as beans, peas, or soy products.

7. Additional Nutrients - This section is where you’ll find information about vitamins and minerals. If a food is listed as having more than 20% of the “Daily Value,” then it’s considered a good source. Choose foods that are high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber. If a food has 5% or less of the daily value, it’s considered a low source. Choose foods that are low in saturated fat, trans fat, and sodium.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	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.



SPOTTING HIDDEN SODIUM & SUGAR



While we need some sodium in our diets to help control the fluid balance in our bodies, most of us get way too much.

Sodium pulls water into the bloodstream. This increases the amount of blood that has to get through vessels. With more blood being forced through the same amount of space, the pressure on the walls of the blood vessels increases. This is damaging, not only to blood vessels but also to your heart because it has to pump against this increased pressure.

Most of the sodium in our diets comes not from our salt shakers, but instead from pre-packaged, processed, prepared foods. Watch out for:

- Bread & rolls (check the difference between brands!)
- Cold cuts, cured meats, and foods made from them
- Poultry (injected with a sodium solution or “broth”)
- Pizza and soup

They're not the only ones with hidden salt! Also check:

- Cheese and buttermilk
- Salted snacks, nuts, and seeds
- Frozen dinners
- Condiments (ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise...)
- Pickles and olives
- Sauces such as barbeque, soy, steak, Worcestershire...
- Seasoning salts such as onion, garlic, and celery

Shoot for less than 2,300 mg/day. Staying under 1,500 mg/day is even better, especially if you have high blood pressure. The quickest way to reduce the amount of sodium in your diet is to decrease the amount of pre-packaged food that you eat and to increase the amount of food that you cook for yourself. Manufacturers often add salt to make up for lack of flavor and as a preservative. Cooking at home and trying out new recipes and can avoid that problem! To learn more, see <https://bit.ly/2qPWGPv>



There are two types of sugar in your food: naturally occurring sugar or added sugar. Health issues occur when we consume too much added sugar.

Our bodies can only process small amounts of sugar, but our diets often contain high doses at frequent intervals. Cutting back on added sugars can help protect against heart disease, obesity, diabetes, tooth decay, and even fatty liver disease. To learn more about sugar's effects on your health, go to <https://www.webmd.com/diabetes/features/how-sugar-affects-your-body>

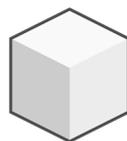
Added sugars are any sugar that's added to a food or beverage during processing, preparation, or at the table. There are 61 different “aliases” for sugar. When you're checking out labels, look for ingredients that end in with the letters “-ose,” such as sucrose, fructose, or dextrose. That's a clue that added sugar is lurking inside.

It's easy to spot sugar in sodas and sweet baked goods, but some “healthy” foods are loaded too!

- Sweetened yogurt (some have up to 7 teaspoons/serving!)
- Pasta sauce
- Granola bars
- Breakfast cereals
- Instant oatmeal
- Salad dressing
- Condiments (ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise...)
- Premade coleslaw, pasta, and other “salads”
- Energy, sports drinks, and bottled teas

Daily totals to aim for are:

- Women—under 6 teaspoons (25grams)
- Men—under 9 teaspoons (38 grams)
- Children—3 to 6 teaspoons (12-25 grams)



Check out “Sugar Science: The Unsweetened Truth” at <http://sugarscience.ucsf.edu/> for more information!