



Learn What Goes Into You and Your Food

Information from Humana Website

Learn What You're eating with a Little Food Label Know-how.

Food labels for healthy living

You can find nutritional facts on almost everything you buy. Unwrap the mystery of nutritional information and get the most out of what's inside the food you eat.

What your labels tell you

The first thing you need to know is that all the numbers are based on a 2,000 or 2,500 calorie diet. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says that a calorie tells how much energy you get from food, but most of us take in more than 2,000 or 2,500 calories in a day. If you eat more than 2,500, it will take more energy to burn off those extra calories.

For the most part, nutritional facts are broken down into four sections:

- Serving Size and Servings Per Container
- Calories and Calories From Fat Per Serving
- Nutrients, Vitamins, and Minerals
- Percentage of Daily Value (DV)

Sample label for
Macaroni & Cheese

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%
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
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

Start Here →

Check Calories

Limit these Nutrients

Get Enough of these Nutrients

Footnote

Quick Guide to % DV

- 5% or less is Low
- 20% or more is High

Source: FDA, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

1. **Serving Size**

The serving size is a measurement of food on which the nutritional facts are based. It's also measured in units like cups or pieces, depending on the food.

2. **Servings Per Container**

This number tells you how many servings are in each package. For a small bag of chips, the serving size is 1. This means that one small bag of chips is one serving size. For a family-sized bag of the same chips, the servings per container number is much higher. The nutritional info on the label is the same because the FDA still suggests you only eat one serving. If you have more than one serving of chips from that family-sized

bag, you multiply the nutritional facts by the number of servings you eat. And that number can really add up.

3. **Calories and Calories from Fat**

These numbers tell you how much energy you get from a serving of food. The difference between the two numbers is that Calories from Fat is part of the Calories. It means that of the serving you eat, part of the calories you eat will be from fat. The higher the Calories from Fat, the higher the food is in fat.

Most fruits and vegetables will most likely have no Calories from Fat, meaning that there is no fat in them.

A general rule of thumb for calories — 40 calories per serving is low, 100 calories is moderate and 400 calories or more is high. Also, eating too many calories per day is linked to weight gain and obesity according to the FDA.

4. **Nutrients, Vitamins, and Minerals**

Nutrients are simply things that your body gets from the food that you eat. Things like fat, cholesterol, sodium, fiber and vitamins are all things your body needs. But if we break these down into two different groups, we can get a good idea of what our nutritional label is telling us.

5. **Things to Avoid**

Total Fat — Fat helps your body absorb vitamins and helps your immune system, but if you take in more than the recommended daily amount, it could lead to trouble.

The FDA recommends that you cut back on your fat intake as much as possible, and according to the Mayo Clinic, a diet high in saturated fat and trans fat can lead to obesity and heart attack.

Cholesterol — Your body uses Cholesterol to give your cells shape and fuel to help them work. But just like fat, too much is a bad thing. Cholesterol can form a fatty build-up in your arteries, which can lead to heart attack and stroke. Doctors from the Mayo Clinic recommend you limit your cholesterol to 300 mg a day. They also say you can lower your cholesterol by adding fruits and vegetables to your diet and limiting animal products like cheese, dairy and meat. **Sodium** — When it's added to our food, it helps give it flavor. In our bodies it helps us keep fluids balanced just right. If we get too much, it can lead to high blood pressure. Keep your sodium low by steering clear of processed lunch meats and frozen foods. **Carbohydrates** — Carbohydrates are a quick and easy boost of fuel for our body, but when we don't burn them for fuel, they get stored as fat. Avoid sugary foods and drinks like candy and soda, and limit bread-based products you take in. Eat whole-grain instead.

6. **Things to Look for**

Fiber — Fiber is the part of plant foods that your body doesn't break down. It helps in digestion, and if it's insoluble fiber, that means it can lower your cholesterol and help your blood sugar levels.

Vitamins and Minerals — The FDA says getting enough vitamins like A, C, and D help you lower your risk of getting diseases and conditions like osteoporosis.

It all adds up

The percentages you see on the right-hand side of the nutritional info give you a percentage of your daily value of the food's nutrients, vitamins and minerals. If you have macaroni and cheese with a daily value of 18% of your total fat, you would be eating 18% of your daily-recommended amount of fat for one serving, based on a 2,000-calorie diet.

Basic things to remember

- Check your serving size and try not to go over one serving
- Check the calories. If it's too high for one serving, pass it up
- Cut back on the fat, cholesterol and sodium and stay away from foods that are high in any of these categories
- Get plenty of fiber, vitamins and minerals
- Follow the suggested serving recommendations for a 2,000- and 2,500-calorie diet and you just might lose weight

To learn more, visit [FDA, U.S. Food and Drug Administration](http://www.fda.gov) or <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-diet/NU00200>.