

# Understanding and Using the Nutrition Facts Label

The **Nutrition Facts** label found on packaged foods and beverages is your **daily tool** for making informed food choices that contribute to lifelong healthy eating habits. Let's get familiar with the key components.

- 1 Servings Per Container** shows the **total number of servings** in the entire food package or container. It's important to check because one package of food may contain more than one serving.
- 2 Serving Size** is based on the **amount of food that is typically eaten at one time** and is not a recommendation of how much to eat or drink. The nutrition information listed on the label is usually based on one serving of the food; however, some containers may also have information displayed per package.
- 3 Calories** refers to the **total number of calories** in a serving of the food. To achieve or maintain a healthy body weight, balance the number of calories you eat and drink with the number of calories your body uses. 2,000 calories a day is used as a general guide for nutrition advice. Learn your number at [www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan](http://www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan).

#### As a general guide:

- **100 calories** per serving of an individual packaged food is considered **moderate**
- **400 calories** or more per serving of an individual packaged food is considered **high**

The Nutrition Facts label can help you learn about, compare, and monitor the nutrients in many foods in your diet.

- 4 % Daily Value (%DV)** shows **how much of a nutrient in a serving of the food contributes to a total daily diet**. Use %DV to determine if a serving of the food is high or low in an individual nutrient and to compare food products (make sure the serving size is the same).

#### As a general guide:

- **5% DV** or less of a nutrient per serving is considered **low**
- **20% DV** or more of a nutrient per serving is considered **high**

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

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

#### Nutrients to get less of:

**Saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.** Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV of these nutrients each day.

#### Nutrients to get more of:

**Dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.** Compare and choose foods to get 100% DV of these nutrients on most days.

Learn more about the Nutrition Facts label at:  
[www.FDA.gov/NutritionFactsLabel](http://www.FDA.gov/NutritionFactsLabel)



# Action Steps for a Healthy Diet

---

Use the Nutrition Facts label and other parts of the food label to help you make healthy food choices. Small changes can add up and make a big difference!

**Eat a variety of colorful vegetables** (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and 100% vegetable juices. Buy frozen (without butter or sauce) and low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables. Try vegetables as snacks, salads, side dishes, and as part of main dishes.

**Make at least half your grains whole grains.** Look for foods with a whole grain listed as the first or second grain ingredient after water. Try whole grains (such as brown rice, couscous, and quinoa) as side dishes and switch from refined to whole grain versions of commonly consumed foods (such as breads, cereals, pasta, and rice). Limit refined grains and products made with refined grains, especially those high in calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and/or sodium (such as cakes, cookies, chips, and crackers).

**Vary your protein routine.** Try beans, peas, lentils, fat-free or 1% low-fat dairy products, eggs, lean meats and poultry, seafood, soy products, nuts, and seeds. Choose seafood and plant sources of protein (such as soy products, beans, peas, lentils, and unsalted nuts and seeds) in place of some meats and poultry. Add beans, peas, and lentils to salads, soups, and side dishes—or serve them as a main dish. Try a small handful of unsalted nuts or seeds as snacks.

**Focus on whole fruits** (fresh, frozen, dried, and canned in 100% fruit juice). Try fruits as snacks and desserts and add fruits to salads and side dishes. Use fruit to top foods like cereal, pancakes, and yogurt instead of other sweet toppings.

**Substitute fat-free or 1% low-fat dairy products** (such as milk, cheese, and yogurt) and/or lactose-free versions and fortified soy beverages for whole and 2% reduced-fat dairy products. Limit dairy desserts that are high in calories, saturated fat, and added sugars (such as ice cream, other frozen desserts, and puddings).

**Limit saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars.** Choose lean meats, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed varieties. Switch from stick margarine to soft margarine (liquid, spray, or tub). Look for light, low sodium, reduced sodium, or no-salt-added versions of packaged foods, snacks, and condiments. Limit baked goods, desserts, sweets, and snack foods (such as cakes, cookies, ice cream, chocolate candies, chips, and microwave popcorn). Consume smaller portions of foods and beverages that are higher in saturated fat, sodium, and/or added sugars, or consume them less often.

## Helpful Meal Preparation Tips

- Try baking, broiling, grilling, or steaming. These cooking methods do not add extra calories.
- Trim or drain fat from meats before or after cooking and remove poultry skin before eating.
- Cook and bake with liquid vegetable oils high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (such as canola and olive oil) instead of fats high in saturated fat (such as butter, lard, shortening, and coconut oil).
- Prepare your food when possible and limit packaged sauces and flavored products (such as rice and pasta mixes).
- Limit the amount of salt and sugar you add when cooking, baking, or eating.
- Rinse sodium-containing canned foods, such as tuna, vegetables, and beans before eating.
- Flavor foods with herbs and spices and no-salt seasoning instead of salt.
- When eating out, ask how your food is being prepared. You can also ask if nutrition information is available to help you make informed choices.