

NUTRITION LABEL: THE ROAD MAP

Today we will be re-introducing you to something you've seen everyday, but more than likely don't pay any attention to or may not fully understand - the nutrition label. The nutrition label is our road map to better grasp the nutritional value of food and in turn make more informed choices.

Let's break it down! There are seven key components to the label.

1. SERVING SIZE

Crucial step number 1 is to know your serving size! If a bag of chips has 5 servings, then you will have to multiply all of the nutrition facts listed by 5 if you plan to eat the whole bag. The food label is only relevant to the serving size.

Most serving sizes are measured in cups & ounces. A cup is approximately the size of a baseball or your fist. Most people are familiar with a 16 oz. water bottle which can serve as a good reference point for ounces.

If you are eating more or less than the serving size listed, you will have to do some simple math to determine the total number of servings you are actually consuming.

2. CALORIES

Step 2 is to know the number of calories you are consuming, and, as recently discussed, that's per serving. Remember: when you eat food you are actually fueling your body. While overall calories do matter, they do not always give the full picture. There are three sources of fuel in your food: fat, carbohydrates, and protein.

3. TOTAL FAT

Fat comes in three forms: the Good (unsaturated), the Bad (saturated) and the Ugly (trans fats.) Our goal is to avoid trans-fats, limit saturated fats, and increase unsaturated fats. A general rule to differentiate between them is that saturated fats are solid at room temperature and found in animal products while unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature and found in plant products. Trans fats are found in any foods that contain partially hydrogenated oils, and are prevalent in fried foods.

4. TOTAL CARBOHYDRATES

Carbohydrates come in two forms: simple and complex. Simple carbohydrates consist of single sugar molecules and are digested quickly, where complex ones consist of longer chains of sugar molecules and are broken down more slowly. The average American diet is prolific in carbohydrates - bread, chips, snacks, fried fast food, etc. Excessive intake of any kind of carbohydrate leads to stored fat in your adipose tissue. When reading a food label, aim for no more than 45 grams per meal.



5. PROTEIN

Protein is our third and final fuel source. It plays a huge role in building and repairing muscle in the human body. Multiply your body weight (in pounds) by 0.36 and you'll arrive at your recommended total daily protein grams. Spread this out over the number of meals you eat in a day to get the number of grams of protein you should consume at each meal.

6. SODIUM (SALT)

Sodium (Na⁺) is a component of table salt (NaCl). Try to limit sodium in your diet as much as possible. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day for a healthy adult, and much less if you have high blood pressure. Foods that have less than or equal to 140 mg sodium per serving are considered low sodium products. Visit the "Healthy Living" section of www.heart.org to learn more.

7. INGREDIENT LIST

This is the last step in our label-reading journey where you can really find the truth about what is in your food. Even if all the nutrition numbers seem to be okay, unhealthy components can still be hiding in the ingredient list. Beware of partially hydrogenated oil, added sugars, artificial sweeteners, and other additives. Less ingredients is always better!

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (300g)

Servings Per Container 6

Amount Per Serving

Calories 358

Calories from Fat 90

% Daily Value

Total Fat 5% 15 %

Saturated Fat 1.7% 25 %

Trans Fat 1% 5 %

Cholesterol 50mg 29%

Sodium 300mg 17%

Total Carbohydrate 10g 11%

Dietary Fiber 2g 5 %

Sugars 3g

Protein 10%

Vitamin A 1%

Vitamin C 3%

Calcium 3%

Iron 1%

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

CHECK YOUR UNDERSTANDING:

1) If the front of the food label says “0 grams of Trans Fats”, can you be certain there are no trans fats in that food?

2) What part of the nutrition label will you start paying more attention to?

ACTION PLAN:

1.) **Download a free app to help you better understand food products.** (Example: Fooducate)

2.) **Start looking at the ingredients in the foods you eat EVERYDAY.** (Example: jelly, peanut butter, cereal, etc.). **Make an appointment with your health coach to discuss further.**

3.) **Visit the FDA’s “Definitions of Nutrition Content Claims” to learn more about what labeling claims really mean.**

- <https://www.fda.gov/downloads/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/UCM265446.pdf> > (page 87)

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