

# Reading a Food Label

## in 6 Easy Steps



### 1. Serving Size

- The food label will say serving size and serving per container at the top.
- The serving size means how much of the package's food is ONE serving. It is usually expressed in units, such as cups, pieces, ounces, or grams.
- Servings per container tells you how many servings are in the ENTIRE CONTAINER.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Servings Per Container About 8	

#### **Example 1:**

A container of macaroni

Serving Size: 1 cup --- This means that one cup of macaroni from the container is considered one serving of this food.

Servings per container: 4 --- This means that there are 4 cups in the entire container

#### **Example 2:**

A package of meatballs

Serving Size: 2 meatballs

Servings per container: 12--- This means that there are 24 meatballs in the entire package.

Because there are 2 meatballs per serving and 12 servings in the entire package, you multiply 2 by 12.

## 2. Calories (and Calories from Fat)

- A calorie is how much energy one serving of food provides.
- Calories are based on ONE serving portions, so when you look at calories, make sure you look to see how much the serving size is and how many servings there are in one container of food.
- Fat supplies a lot of calories. On the food label, calories from fat simply shows how many calories in one serving come from the fat in the food.

Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 230	Calories from Fat 40

### Example 1:

A container of macaroni

Serving size: 1 cup

Servings per container: 4

Calories: 120 – This means that there are 120 calories PER SERVING. There are 4 servings in this one container of macaroni. Therefore, in the entire container, there are 480 calories.

Calories from fat: 60 --- This means that out of the 120 calories per serving, 60 of them are from the fat in the food.

### Example 2:

Serving Size: 2 meatballs

Servings per container: 12

Calories: 200 – This means there are 200 calories PER SERVING which is 2 meatballs. There are 12 servings in this package of meatballs. Therefore, there are 2400 calories in the entire package.

Calories from fat: 110 --- This means that out of the 200 calories per serving of meatballs, 110 of them are from the fat in the food.

## 3. Nutrients on the Food Label

- Next on the food label you will see all the nutrients listed in a column.
- There are some nutrients you should limit, and some nutrients you should make sure you get enough of.
- Fat, cholesterol, and sodium are all nutrients that you should limit. A diet high in these nutrients can increase your risk of obesity, heart disease, and some cancers.
- **Dietary fiber and vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron, etc., listed at the bottom are very important, and you should have a diet high in these nutrients.**
- There are also carbohydrates and protein listed which are important to include in your diet.
- The amount of each nutrient in a serving is listed by grams.
- **See #4 and #5 for more detailed information on how much of each nutrient you should eat a day.**

<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	
Saturated Fat 1g	
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	
Dietary Fiber 4g	
Sugars 1g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
<hr/>	
Vitamin A	
Vitamin C	
Calcium	
Iron	

## 4. Understanding the Footnote at the Bottom of the Nutrition Facts Label

- The footnote may not be on the package if the size of the label is too small.
- When the full footnote does appear, **it will always be the same**. It doesn't change from product to product, because it shows recommended dietary advice for all Americans--**it is not about a specific food product**.
- The footnote shows the daily values that health experts recommend for some nutrients. Daily Values will be shown for a 2000 and 2500 calorie diet.
- For the fat, cholesterol, and sodium the footnote will say "less than" before the daily value. Health experts say that these should be limited. This means that you should get less than the daily value stated on the footnote.
- The daily value for each nutrient equals 100% daily amount of that nutrient.

	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

*For example*, the saturated fat daily value is 20 grams. This means that once you reach 20 grams of saturated fat from the food you eat, you have reached the maximum daily amount health experts recommend. For the saturated fats the footnote also says "less than" which means that it is better to eat less than 20 grams of saturated fat a day.

See the table below for a summary all the nutrients in the footnote.

*(table created by the FDA)*

Based on a 2,000 Calorie Diet

Nutrient	DV	%DV	Goal
Total Fat	65g	= 100%DV	Less than
Sat Fat	20g	= 100%DV	Less than
Cholesterol	300mg	= 100%DV	Less than
Sodium	2400mg	= 100%DV	Less than
Total Carbohydrate	300g	= 100%DV	At least
Dietary Fiber	25g	= 100%DV	At least

## 5. The Percent Daily Value

There are recommended amounts of the nutrients that you should eat each day as seen in the footnote.

The %Daily Value (%DV) shows you how many nutrients one serving of food provided you for that day.

The %DV is based on a 2000 calorie diet. This means that it is most accurate for people who eat about 2,000 calories a day.

You, like most people, may not know how many calories you consume in a day, but you can still use the %DV as a frame of reference whether or not you consume more or less than 2,000 calories.

In general the rules are as follows:

- 5% or more is considered low which means you are getting a small amount of that nutrient based on your daily needs.
  - 20% or more is high which means the food is providing a large amount of that nutrient based on your daily needs.
- ✓ For fat, sodium, and cholesterol the %DV should be 5% or less because these nutrients need to be limited in the diet.
- ✓ For dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals you can have a higher %DV of these because they are very good for you.

**Note that *Trans* fat, Sugars and, Protein do not list a %DV on the Nutrition Facts label. The FDA describes why:**

**Trans Fat:** Experts could not provide a reference value for *trans* fat nor any other information that FDA believes is sufficient to establish a Daily Value or %DV. Scientific reports link *trans* fat (and saturated fat) with raising blood LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels, both of which increase your risk of coronary heart disease, a leading cause of death in the US.

**Protein:** A %DV is required to be listed if a claim is made for protein, such as "high in protein". Otherwise, unless the food is meant for use by infants and children under 4 years old, none is needed. Current scientific evidence indicates that protein intake is not a public health concern for adults and children over 4 years of age.

**Sugars:** No daily reference value has been established for sugars because no recommendations have been made for the total amount to eat in a day. Keep in mind, the sugars listed on the Nutrition Facts label include naturally occurring sugars (like those in fruit and milk) as well as those added to a food or drink. Check the ingredient list for specifics on added sugars.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Servings Per Container About 8	
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b> 230	Calories from Fat 40
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 8g	<b>12%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
<i>Trans</i> Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 160mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>12%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>16%</b>
Sugars 1g	
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
<b>Vitamin A</b>	10%
<b>Vitamin C</b>	8%
<b>Calcium</b>	20%
<b>Iron</b>	45%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value 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



<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size 1 oz. (28g/About 15 chips)	
Servings Per Container About 12	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 140	Calories from Fat 60
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 6g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Polyunsaturated Fat 2g	
Monounsaturated Fat 3.5g	
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 130mg	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 18g	<b>6%</b>
Dietary Fiber 2g	<b>9%</b>
Sugars 3g	
<b>Protein</b> 2g	
Vitamin A 0%	• Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0%	• Iron 2%
Vitamin E 8%	• Thiamin 2%
Niacin 2%	• Vitamin B <sub>6</sub> 4%
Phosphorus 6%	• Magnesium 4%
Zinc 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:	
	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
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	• Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

**Example:**

Here is a Sun Chips label.

According to the %Daily Value:

**Total fat** content in 15 chips (one serving) is 10% which is not low (5%) and not high (20%).

**Saturated fat** content is low at 5%.

**Cholesterol** is low at 0%.

**Sodium** is low at 5%.

**Carbohydrate** content per serving is 6% which is close to being considered low.

**Dietary Fiber** is in mid-range at 9%.

Use these tips to help you choose healthy options when you are grocery shopping.

**SUMMARY**

- ✓ Watch the serving size and servings per container.
- ✓ Check the amount of calories per serving.
- ✓ Choose products with high levels of fiber, vitamins, and minerals and low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium.
- ✓ Try to follow the daily values for each nutrient.