



Healthy Me!



Devoted to improving the lives of our area's students Learn how to read a food label

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Whether you buy a snack at school or help with the grocery shopping at home, reading beyond a product name can provide important information about the contents of the product. A good place to start is the Nutrition Facts Panel, found on the back or side of the product. This label has been required for more than 20 years by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and all companies have to comply with the same standards. This is what you will see:

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories 230	
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	16%
Saturated Fat 1g	2%
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.

Saturated Fat, Added Sugars & Sodium – The label not only provides information about the good nutrients to include in your diet, but also those to limit. Limiting consumption of saturated fat, added sugars and sodium can help reduce your risk for disease now and later in life.

Percent Daily Values – The percentages on the right side of the label are known as percent Daily Values (DV) and can help you evaluate how a particular food fits into your daily meal plan. Daily Values are average levels of nutrients for a person eating 2,000 calories a day. Using that guide, a food item with a 5 percent DV of fat provides 5 percent of the total fat a person should eat per day. Some people may need more or less than 2,000 calories day, but this is still a good guide.

Serving Size – The package size may look like one serving but beware! How does your typical portion size (the amount you actually eat) compare to the serving size listed on the panel? If the serving size is one cup and you eat two cups, you are getting twice the calories and fat listed.

Total Calories – Remember the calories listed are for one serving not the entire package. If you are concerned about weight gain or loss, comparing calories with the listed serving size can be helpful.

Key Nutrients – The key nutrients in any food are protein, carbohydrates and fat.

- **Protein** – A percentage daily value for protein is not required on the label but depending on gender, activity level and weight, approximately 60 – 90+ grams are needed daily.
- **Carbohydrates** – There are three types of carbohydrates: sugars, starches and fiber. Eat whole-grain breads, cereals, rice and pasta, plus fruits and vegetables for the best sources of carbs.
- **Sugars** – Sugars occur naturally in foods such as fruit juice and milk or come from refined sources such as table sugar or corn syrup. Dietary guidelines recommend consuming no more than 10 percent of daily calories from added refined sugars.

Vitamins, Minerals & Fiber – Look for products that have fiber, potassium, vitamin D, calcium and iron to maintain good health and help reduce your risk of health conditions like anemia.



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Ingredient List – Foods with more than one ingredient must have an ingredient list on the label. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, which means the largest amounts are listed first. If you have a food allergy, the “big 8” allergens will be listed in common terms and often under the ingredient statement.

Other Information – Frequently you will see terms such as “natural,” “healthy,” “non-GMO” or “organic” on the labels. These labels are not required by government agencies and can mean different things.

- **Organic** – If the product is labeled “USDA organic” that means the product has been certified as an organically grown product without the aid of synthetic fertilizers or sprays.
- **Non-GMO** – These labels indicate that the product does not contain ingredients from genetically engineered crops. Interestingly, there are only eight food crops that can be modified, though you will see this label on many other products.
- **Healthy/Natural** – These terms do not have a clear or regulated definition. Natural may mean ingredients from plant/animal sources rather than artificially made, but the definition is left to the product manufacturer.

Be sure to read food labels so you can determine if the product you are about to buy and eat is healthy!



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