



A quick check of the “Nutrition Facts” label can help you spot foods that are good for your health.

You can learn a lot about what you are eating by reading the “Nutrition Facts” label on the foods you buy. Used well, this information can help you make healthier choices.

Serving size: Look here first!

Is your serving the same as the one on the label? If you eat double the serving size listed, you need to double the calories and other nutrient values. If you have diabetes or are following a specific meal plan, the serving size on the label may not match the serving sizes in your meal plan. Always double check the serving size.

See sample label on the reverse side.

Calories

This is the number of calories you will consume in one serving of this product. Knowing how many calories your food contains helps you monitor calorie intake over the course of the day. On average, adults consume about 2,000 calories in a day. Your needs may be higher or lower depending on your age, gender, and how much you exercise. If you are trying to lose weight, you should avoid or limit high calorie foods.

Total fat

This tells you how much fat is in one serving. Most people need to cut back on fat. A low-fat food has 3 grams (g) or less of total fat per serving.

Saturated fat and trans fat

Saturated fat and trans fat are included in the amount of total fat.

They are also listed separately because they are the two types of fat we should try to limit or avoid in our diets.

Both saturated and trans fats in your diet can raise your cholesterol level. Diets high in these fats may increase the risk of heart disease. Trans fats increase your risk more than saturated. Not only do trans fats raise total cholesterol levels, they also lower good cholesterol (HDL) which helps protect against heart disease.

A food is low in saturated fat if it has less than 1 gram per serving. Aim for fewer than 20 grams of saturated fat per day, and as little trans fat as possible.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is found only in foods from animal sources, such as meats, poultry, fish, eggs, and dairy products. Try to keep your cholesterol intake to less than 300 milligrams (mg) per day. A low-cholesterol food has less than 20 mg per serving.

Sodium

We know this as “salt.” Too much sodium may raise your blood pressure. Aim for less than 1,500 mg per day if you:

- are African American (of any age)
- are 51 or older
- have hypertension (high blood pressure), diabetes, heart failure, or chronic kidney disease

For all others, less than 2300 mg of sodium each day is recommended.

A low-sodium food has 140 mg or less in one serving.

Total carbohydrate

Carbohydrates are found in bread, pasta, rice, cereal, fruit, potatoes, starchy vegetables, and sweets. If you have diabetes, pay attention to total carbohydrate grams per serving, not just the sugar grams.

Dietary fiber: It is important to eat plenty of fiber, and most Americans don't get enough. Fiber helps reduce the risk of diabetes and heart disease and can help with weight control. Aim for 25 to 30 grams of fiber per day. It is found in whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.

Sugars: Sugar is listed separately, and is also included in the total grams of carbohydrate. It includes both naturally-occurring and added sugar. It is best to avoid added sugar when possible.

Protein

Protein is found in both plant and animal foods, including beans, nuts, fish, poultry, meat, eggs, and dairy products.

Percent daily value (DV)

This is the percentage of the recommended daily amount of this nutrient in one serving of the food. The Percent Daily Values are what would be recommended in a 2,000 calorie per day diet. The important part of

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

Sample label for macaroni and cheese

Check the serving size: Look at the serving size to find out how many servings you are actually consuming. If you eat two servings, you will double the calories and nutrients, including the % Daily Values (DV).

Make your calories count: Look at the calories on the label and compare them with the nutrients it contains. Then decide whether the food is a good choice for you.

Know your fats. Look for foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol to help reduce the risk of heart disease (5% DV or less). There is no DV for trans fat because it is best to limit or avoid it entirely.

Keep sodium in check. Processed foods like this macaroni and cheese are often high in sodium. Look for low-sodium foods with less than 140 mg per serving, but watch the total amount you consume.

Some vitamins and minerals may be listed with percentage of daily values in one serving.

Daily Values tell you how much you should be eating based on a 2,000 or 2,500 calorie diet. This section is the same on every food label. It is a reference to remind you how much of these nutrients you should aim for each day.

Reminder of the number of calories in a gram of fat, carbohydrate and protein. This is the same on every food label.

Amount Per Serving		% Daily Value*		
Nutrition Facts				
Serving size 1 cup (226g)				
Servings Per Container 2				
Calories 250		Calories from Fat 110		
Total Fat 12g			18%	
Saturated Fat 3g			15%	
Trans Fat 1.5g				
Cholesterol 30mg			10%	
Sodium 470mg			20%	
Total Carbohydrate 31g			10%	
Dietary Fiber 0g			0%	
Sugars 5g				
Protein 5g				
*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	65 g	80 g	
Sat Fat	Less than	20 g	25 g	
Cholesterol	Less than	300 mg	300mg	
Sodium	Less than	2400 mg	2400 mg	
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g	
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g	

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrates 4 • Protein 4

these percentages is that they help you find foods that are high in good nutrients and low in nutrients you want to avoid. If the value is 20% or more, it's considered high. If it's 5% or less, it's low.

Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Visit kp.org/nutrition for more tips on healthy eating.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.