

Read Food Labels

Information on food labels can help you choose healthy foods. What do you look for?

Read the “Nutrition Facts.”

A. Look at serving size and how many servings are in the product.

| Nutrition Facts | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Serving Size 1 cup (228g) | | |
| Servings Per Container 2 | | |
| Amount Per Serving | | |
| Calories 250 | Calories from Fat 110 | |
| % Daily Value* | | |
| Total Fat 12g | 18% | |
| Saturated Fat 3g | 15% | |
| Trans Fat 1.5g | | |
| Cholesterol 30g | 10% | |
| Sodium 470mg | 20% | |
| Total Carbohydrate 31g | 10% | |
| Dietary Fiber 0g | 0% | |
| Sugars 5g | | |
| Protein 5g | | |
| | | |
| Vitamin A | 4% | |
| Vitamin C | 2% | |
| Calcium | 20% | |
| Iron | 4% | |

Look at serving size and how many servings are in the product. Serving sizes are given in familiar units, such as cups or pieces. This is followed by the metric amount (e.g., the number of grams). Serving sizes are often based on the amount of food people typically eat.

B. Read calories per serving.

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| Protein 5g | |
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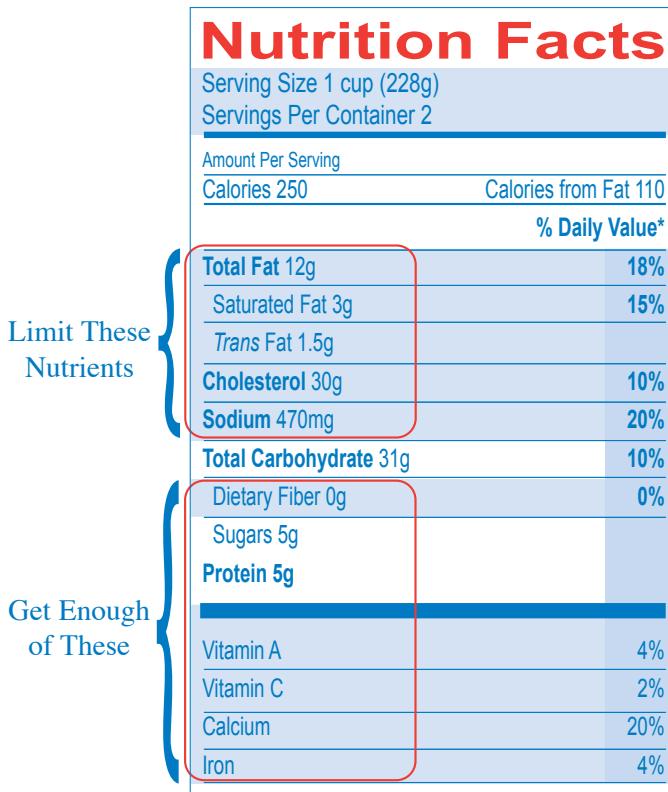
Calories tell you how much energy you get from a serving of this food. The label also tells you how many of the calories in one serving come from fat. In the example, there are 250 calories in a serving of this macaroni and cheese; 110 calories are from fat. This means almost half of the calories come from fat.

More Information

For more information on Food Labeling and Nutrition, contact:

Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
www.fda.gov
Search for “Nutrition Facts.”

C. Look at the nutrients per serving.



The nutrients listed first are the ones people eat enough, or too much of. Eating too much saturated and *trans* fats or too much sodium may increase your risk of heart disease, some cancers, and high blood pressure.

Most people don't get enough dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron in their diets. Eating enough of these nutrients can improve your health and help reduce the risk of some diseases and conditions. For example, getting enough calcium can reduce the risk of osteoporosis, in which bones become brittle and break as one ages.

D. Look at Percent Daily Value (% DV).

Look for low %DV from these nutrients

Look for high %DV from these nutrients

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| Amount Per Serving | |
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| Trans Fat 1.5g | |
| Cholesterol 30g | 10% |
| Sodium 470mg | 20% |
| Total Carbohydrate 31g | 10% |
| Dietary Fiber 0g | 0% |
| Sugars 5g | |
| Protein 5g | |
| Vitamin A | 4% |
| Vitamin C | 2% |
| Calcium | 20% |
| Iron | 4% |

Quick Tip

In general, look for foods that have low %DV for total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Balance foods that have 20% or more of these with ones that have 5% DV or less.

In general, look for foods that have 20% or more for fiber and/or at least one of the vitamins and iron or other minerals that can be listed.

Daily Values (DVs) are a way to tell if a food is high or low in nutrients. In general 5% DV or less is low in a nutrient; 20% or more is high in a nutrient.

The Percent Daily Value (%DV) on food labels is based on a 2000 calorie diet. This means that they are not exact for what Daily Values are for 1200-1300, 1500-1600, and 1800 calorie diets. So, use food label %DVs as a general guide to see if a food gives any nutrients for the calories it has. If you want to be more exact, use the guidelines in the chart that follows.

Daily Reference Values (DRVs) for Different Calorie Levels

| Nutrient | 1200-1300 Calories | 1500-1600 Calories | 1800 Calories |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Total fat | 40-43 grams (maximum/day) | 50-53 grams (maximum/day) | 60 grams (maximum/day) |
| Sat. and <i>trans</i> fats | 13.3-14.4 grams (maximum/day) | 16.6-17.7 grams (maximum/day) | 20 grams (maximum/day) |
| Carbo-hydrate | 180-195 grams (maximum/day) | 225-240 grams (maximum/day) | 270 grams (maximum/day) |
| Protein | 30-32.5 grams (minimum/day) | 37.5-40 grams (minimum/day) | 45 grams (minimum/day) |
| Fiber* | 14-15 grams (minimum/day) | 17-18 grams (minimum/day) | 20 grams (minimum/day) |

{**Note:** Many health organizations advise 20 to 35 grams of dietary fiber per day, regardless of calorie intake. Check with your doctor about your fiber needs.} To get adequate dietary fiber on reduced calorie eating plans, choose whole-grain breads and cereals over refined ones.

Read food labels for dietary fiber. This macaroni and cheese product has no fiber. Remember that dietary fiber is found in plant foods. You could add fiber to this food by adding tomatoes and chopped green peppers.

Compare Nutrition Facts for Three Cereals

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)

Serving Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories

Calories from Fat

Total Fat

Saturated Fat

Trans Fat

Cholesterol

Sodium

Potassium

Total Carbohydrate

Dietary Fiber

Sugars

Protein

| | Wheat Squares Sweetened (35g) | Corn Flakes Not Sweetened (19g) | Mixed Grain Flakes Sweetened (27g) | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|----|
| Calories | 120 | 70 | 100 | |
| Calories from Fat | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| % Daily Value* | % Daily Value* | % Daily Value* | % Daily Value* | |
| Total Fat | 0g | 0% | 0g | 0% |
| Saturated Fat | 0g | 0% | 0g | 0% |
| Trans Fat | 0g | 0g | 0g | 0g |
| Cholesterol | 0mg | 0% | 0mg | 0% |
| Sodium | 0mg | 0% | 200mg | 8% |
| Potassium | 125mg | 4% | 25mg | 1% |
| Total Carbohydrate | 29g | 10% | 17g | 6% |
| Dietary Fiber | 3g | 12% | 1g | 4% |
| Sugars | 8g | 6g | 13g | |
| Protein | 4g | 1g | 1g | |

After comparing these three labels, which cereal would you choose?

One advantage for all three is that they are a set portion (a small box that is one serving size). Overall, the wheat squares may be the best choice based on the nutrients you get for the calories it has. It would even be better to choose wheat squares that are not sweetened. The same serving size would have less added sugar and calories. Corn flakes is also a good choice. One serving has 70 calories. This is close to the amount of calories in 1 serving of grains & starches (80 calories).

Can These Meals Be Part of a Healthy Daily Diet?

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Pizza (198g)

Serving Per Container 1

| Amount Per Serving | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Calories 530 | Calories from Fat 240 |
| | % Daily Value* |
| Total Fat 27g | 42% |
| Saturated Fat 10g | 50% |
| Cholesterol 50g | 17% |
| Sodium 1,090mg | 45% |
| Total Carbohydrate 50g | 17% |
| Dietary Fiber 4g | 17% |
| Sugars 6g | |
| Protein 24g | |
| <hr/> | |
| Vitamin A | 35% |
| Vitamin C | 0% |
| Calcium | 50% |
| Iron | 8% |

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 Pizza (186g)

Serving Per Container 1

| Amount Per Serving | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Calories 380 | Calories from Fat 100 |
| | % Daily Value* |
| Total Fat 11g | 17% |
| Saturated Fat 3.5g | 18% |
| Cholesterol 40g | 13% |
| Sodium 550mg | 23% |
| Total Carbohydrate 47g | 16% |
| Dietary Fiber 6g | 24% |
| Sugars 4g | |
| Protein 23g | |
| Vitamin A | 15% |
| Vitamin C | 8% |
| Calcium | 50% |
| Iron | 20% |

Four Cheese Pizza: This choice is harder to fit into a healthy diet. One serving (the whole pizza) uses 50% of a daily saturated fat allowance, leaving only 50% for all other foods and drinks that day.

Read the Label

Besides looking at saturated fat, of the two choices, the Deluxe Combo Pizza has more dietary fiber (6g) and less sodium (550mg).

Deluxe Combo Pizza: This meal is easier to fit into a healthy diet. One serving (the whole pizza), gives 18% of a daily saturated fat allowance. This leaves 82% for all other foods and drinks that day.

Is this a Healthy Snack Food? Read the label.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 package

Serving Per Container 1

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110

% Daily Value

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Total Fat 12g | 19% |
| Saturated Fat 2g | 10% |
| Trans Fat 0g | ** |
| Cholesterol 0mg | 0% |
| Sodium 310mg | 13% |
| Total Carbohydrate 30g | 10% |
| Dietary Fiber 2g | 9% |
| Sugars 2g | |
| Protein 5g | |
| Vitamin A 6% | • Vitamin C 0% |
| Calcium 6% | • Iron 4% |
| Vitamin E 6% | • Thiamin 2% |
| Riboflavin 2% | • Niacin 2% |
| Vitamin B ₆ 6% | • Phosphorus 10% |



INGREDIENTS: CORN, VEGETABLE OIL (CONTAINS ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING: CORN, SOYBEAN, OR SUNFLOWER OIL), CHEDDAR CHEESE (CULTURED MILK, SALT, ENZYMES), TOMATO POWDER, WHEY, LACTOSE, MONOSODIUM GLUTAMATE, ONION POWDER, PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED SOYBEAN AND COTTONSEED OIL, BUTTERMILK SOLIDS, ROMANO CHEESE FROM COW'S MILK (CULTURED MILK, SALT, ENZYMES), SUGAR, SODIUM DIACETATE, CORN STARCH, WHEY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE, CORN SYRUP SOLIDS, NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR (INCLUDING NATURAL LIME FLAVOR AND NATURAL JALAPENO FLAVOR), FRUCTOSE, MALTODEXTRIN, SPICES, SODIUM CASEINATE, GARLIC POWDER, DISODIUM PHOSPHATE, CITRIC ACID, ARTIFICIAL COLOR (INCLUDING RED 40 LAKE, YELLOW 6, YELLOW 6 LAKE, YELLOW 5 LAKE, BLUE 1, RED 40), MALIC ACID, LIME JUICE SOLIDS, LACTIC ACID, DEXTROSE, DISODIUM INOSINATE, DISODIUM GUANYLATE, SODIUM CITRATE, AND CARRAGEENIN.

Answer: The good thing about this snack food is that it does not have *trans* fat. This is because it has vegetable oil, not “hydrogenated” vegetable oil. It does, though, have 250 calories and 12 grams of fat. That is a lot for a snack. Eat foods like this less often. Make 2 or 3 servings out of this individual snack bag, too.

Ingredient List

This lists what's in the food from most to least by weight. There is more of the first ingredient than the second and so on. Choose foods that list acceptable ingredients first, second, and third.

Also, check the list for ingredients that you may be allergic or sensitive to, such as milk, eggs, peanuts, and wheat.

Preparation Instructions

Look at the instructions on package directions. You can change the way the food is prepared to lower total fat, saturated fat, and sodium, as well as to increase nutrients, such as fiber and vitamin C.

Sample Macaroni and Cheese Box

| Directions: | Changes You Can Make: |
|---|--|
| Add macaroni and 1 tsp. salt to 6 cups boiling water, stirring occasionally 7 to 10 minutes or to desired tenderness. | Omit the salt. This will decrease the amount of sodium per serving. |
| Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup margarine and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk and the cheese sauce, then mix well. | Add half of the margarine (2 Tbsp.) or substitute diet margarine and skim milk. This will lower the fat content by more than half per serving. |
| Makes 3 cups. | Add chopped green pepper and tomato pieces or garnish with tomatoes, peppers, etc. This will increase dietary fiber and vitamin C and add color. |

Open Dating

Look at this so you won't buy food items that are spoiled or will spoil before you use them. Buy them before "sell by" or "expiration date," which is the last date the product should be used.



Add vegetables to dishes or garnish the plate with vegetables to increase nutrients and add color.