

How to Read a Nutrition Label

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- 1) Check the serving size
 - a) Make sure it is reasonable (ie what you would usually eat)
 - b) This is especially important when comparing two similar products since this is a common way companies 'cheat' (by shrinking their serving size). Obviously to compare the amount of a substance (eg sodium) in two similar products, you have to compare the same serving size.
- 2) Calories - look at total calories and calories from fat.
- 3) Total fat < 3 grams/serving, 20-30 grams per day
 - a) General rule - want fat calories < 20% of total calories (ie no more than 2.5 grams of fat per 100 calories).
 - b) To get calories from grams of fat, multiply by 9 (or 10 which is easier)
 - i) For example if a package label says the total calories are 270 and the food contains 10 grams of fat, the calories from fat would be 90 (10 grams x 9 calories per gram). Thus for the whole package 33% of the calories (90 out of 270 calories) come from fat which is HIGH.
 - ii) See Cal-Fat% calculator [here](#) (enter calories & grams of fat)
 - c) The **front** of the package will often state fat % by weight - this is VERY misleading.
- 4) Salt/sodium
 - a) Goal is to have a total intake of less than 2000 mg (2 grams) per day from all sources.
 - b) Our body needs about 250 mg of sodium per day
 - c) By just meeting our caloric requirements with fruits & vegetables we get about 500 mg of sodium per day, so we don't need to worry about getting enough sodium.
 - d) One teaspoon of salt has 2200 mg of sodium (including sea or Himalayan).
 - e) Get rid of the salt shaker ! Try Mrs Dash (salt free, made from vegetables).
 - f) A good rule of thumb is that the mg of sodium should not be greater than the number of calories per serving. For example a food which is 100 calories per serving should have 100 mg of sodium (or less) per serving.
 - g) Condiments can have a sodium/calorie ratio of up to 5:1 because you shouldn't be consuming too much at a sitting.
- 5) Carbohydrates
 - a) Lists total carbohydrates
 - b) A great way to estimate the amount of 'free' carbohydrates is to subtract the number of grams of fiber from the number of grams of carbohydrate. The smaller the better, ideally less than 12 g per serving.
 - c) Fiber
 - i) Goal 40 grams/day
 - ii) Look for ≥ 3 grams per 100 calories.
 - d) 'Sugars' means total sugars - it is only the added sugars that matter.
- 6) Ingredients

- a) Look for only a few total ingredients
- b) With grains you want **WHOLE grains** (not refined) which contain the entire grain kernel - the bran, germ and endosperm.
 - i) Must say the word 'whole'. Other terms such as "rolled", "extruded" "stone ground", and "cracked", "crushed" represent whole grains.
 - ii) Cracked wheat (bulgur) and cooked grains are still whole grains.
 - iii) The terms multigrain, stone-ground, 100% wheat, seven-grain, durum, semolina, bleached/unbleached, enriched, or bran may sound good but do not indicate that the ingredient is a whole grain.
- c) When it comes to ingredients you don't understand, I suggest you look them up at befoodsmart.com which has an lovely A-B-C-D-E-F rating system for the health safety of different ingredients.
- d) Sugar
 - i) The real problem is the added sugar. Don't worry about sugar when eaten as part of the whole plant (ie fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains).
 - ii) Note that ingredients are listed on labels in descending order by weight. This means that a product contains more of the first ingredients listed than the last.
 - iii) Avoid products with sugar in the first 3-5 ingredients.
 - iv) Some companies use the weight rule on labelling to hide how much added sugar is actually in a product.
 - (1) Instead of adding just one type of sugar, they add two or more, and the total weight of each of these is small enough that they are buried in the list.
 - (2) Sugar has many names including: brown rice syrup, cane juice, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, lactose, sucrose, honey, and molasses, barley malt.
 - (3) Also watch out for ingredients ending with 'ose' - eg dextrose, maltose
 - (4) Another trick is removing water from the sugar source - eg evaporated cane juice, dehydrated honey.
- e) Names for milk products in ingredients include: milk, cheese, casein, caseinate, lactalbumin, whey,
- f) Fats
 - i) Hydrogenated oils (AVOID) - these are as bad as lard - eg margarine, shortening
 - ii) Saturated animal fat (AVOID): include lard, dairy (butter, cheese, milk, yogurt, sour cream, whipped cream, ice cream), chicken, turkey, meat, fish, eggs
 - iii) Saturated vegetable fat (AVOID) include coconut oil, palm oil, palm kernel oil, cocoa butter.

Sources

- 1) JSChumacher.org [here](#)

Misc Resources

- 1) [Calorie King](#) - calorie counter - includes fast foods
- 2) [Cronometer](#) - track your nutrition, fitness, and health data. Also analyses your diet
- 3) [MyFitnessPal](#) - track your nutrition, fitness, and health data. Also analyses your diet