

Nutrition Fact Labels

Why are food labels important?

Food labels give consumers useful information about the foods they eat so that consumers know how individual foods fit into their daily diets.

What pieces of information do food labels provide?

→ Ingredient list.

Ingredients are listed in descending order according to weight. The first ingredient in the list contributes the most weight to the food.

Example: If a loaf of bread contains “white flour, whole wheat flour, water, and yeast”, it is considered white bread because there is more white flour than whole wheat flour.

→ Serving size and number of servings per container.

Serving sizes were designed to reflect how much food people usually eat.

To make comparison shopping easier, all labels for a given product use the same serving size.

Examples: The serving size for all ice creams is ½ cup. All beverage servings are 8 fluid ounces or 1 cup.

→ Nutrition Facts.

Nutrition Facts report the amount of energy (calories) and certain nutrients in the food. They also list energy and nutrients as a percentage of recommended intake (% Daily Value). Note that amounts of *trans*-fatty acids are not listed on the label.

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|--------------------------------|---|
| • Total food energy (calories) | • Total carbohydrate (grams) |
| • Calories from fat (calories) | • Dietary fiber (grams) |
| • Total fat (grams) | • Sugar (grams) |
| • Saturated fat (grams) | • Protein (grams) |
| • Cholesterol (milligrams) | • Vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, and calcium (% Daily Value) |
| • Sodium (milligrams) | |

What does “Daily Value” mean?

→ Daily Values are the recommended intakes for the typical adult consumer.

→ The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) created Daily Values for food labels so that consumers have a way to estimate how much of a certain nutrient is recommended.

→ % Daily Values are based on a 2000-calorie diet, which is about right for moderately active women, teenage girls, and sedentary men. Older adults, children, and sedentary women may need fewer calories. A 2500-calorie diet is about right for many men, teenage boys, and active women. Very active people may need more calories.

Food Label Claim	Definition (Per Serving)
General	
Healthy	A food that is low in fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium and that contains at least 10% of the Daily Values for vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, protein, or fiber.
High, Rich in, or Excellent Source	20% or more of the Daily Value for a given nutrient
More or Added	At least 10% more of the Daily Value for a given nutrient than the comparison food.
Good source of	Provides between 10 and 19% of the Daily Value for a given nutrient.
Light	See definitions below in terms of energy, fat, and sodium.
Energy	
Calorie free	5 calories or less
Light	33% fewer calories than comparison food
Low calorie	40 calories or less
Reduced calorie	25% fewer calories than comparison food
Fat and Cholesterol	
Fat-free	0.5 grams of fat or less and no added fat or oil
Low fat	3 grams or less of fat
Less fat	25% less fat than comparison food
Saturated fat-free	Less than 0.5 grams saturated fat and 0.5 grams of <i>trans</i> -fatty acids
Low saturated fat	1 gram or less of saturated fat
Less saturated fat	25% less saturated fat than comparison food
Cholesterol-free	Less than 2 mg cholesterol and less than 2 grams saturated fat
Low cholesterol	20 mg or less cholesterol and less than 2 grams saturated fat
Less cholesterol	25% less cholesterol than comparison food (with a reduction of at least 20 mg cholesterol) and less than 2 grams saturated fat
Extra lean	Less than 5 grams fat, 2 grams saturated fat, and 95 mg cholesterol per serving of meat, poultry, and seafood
Lean	Less than 10 grams fat, 4.5 grams saturated fat, and 95 mg cholesterol per serving of meat, poultry, and seafood
Light	50% less fat than in the comparison food
Carbohydrates: Fiber and Sugar	
High fiber	More than 5 grams of fiber
Sugar-free	Less than 0.5 grams of sugar
Sodium	
Sodium-free or Salt-free	Less than 5 mg of sodium
Low sodium	Less than 140 mg or sodium
Light in sodium	Less than 50% of the sodium of the comparison food
Light	A low-calorie, low-fat food with a 50% reduction in sodium
Very low sodium	Less than 35 mg of sodium

Can a diet help reduce the risk for certain diseases?

- Some food packages carry health claims. A health claim is a statement that describes the link between a nutrient and the chances that a person may develop a certain disease or health condition.
- A food must contain certain amounts of a nutrient before the manufacturer can make a health claim.
- Examples of diet-disease relationships include:

Disease	Diet
Osteoporosis	High in calcium
Cancer	High in fiber-containing grain products, fruits, and vegetables
Cancer	High in fruits or vegetables (high in dietary fiber or vitamins A and C)
Heart disease	High in fiber from fruits, vegetables, and grain products
Cancer	Low in fat
Heart disease	Low in saturated fat and cholesterol
High blood pressure	Low in sodium

Notes:



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