



What is on a Food Label?

You can gain useful information by reading labels on the foods you buy. The food label provides information about the ingredients and nutrients in foods. This information can be used to help you make healthy food choices.

The Food Label Includes the Following Parts:

Food Product Name: This will include the brand and common name of the product and may also include a picture.

Net Contents: This information represents the entire weight including liquid. The amount listed is in common household amounts (pounds/ounces) and metric measures (grams/milliliters).

Manufacturer's Name and Address: This information is provided so that you can contact them if you have any questions about the product.

Nutrition Facts Label: On the nutrition facts label, manufacturers are required to provide information on certain nutrients. The mandatory nutrients are total calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, dietary fiber, sugars, protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron. If a claim is made about any other ingredient or nutrient the manufacturer is required to include that information. See "A Quick Guide to Reading a Nutrition Facts Label" for more information on reading a nutrition facts label.

Ingredient List: A food label must include a list of ingredients in decreasing order by weight. This list is required on all foods with more than one ingredient.

Nutrient Content Claims: Words and phrases that may be used to describe the amount of a nutrient in a food, but does not tell exactly how much. Some nutrient content claims that may be seen on a food product label include: "Low Fat," "Sugar Free," "Good Source of Calcium," "Low Sodium," or "Reduced Sodium."

Health Claims: Describe how a food or food component such as fat, calcium, iron, or fiber relates to a disease or health related condition. Only health claims supported by scientific evidence are allowed on labels. Currently there are eight health claims that have been approved. They include: Calcium and osteoporosis; Fat and cancer; Saturated fat, cholesterol, and heart disease; Fiber containing grain products, fruits, vegetables and cancer; Fruits, vegetables, and grain products that contain fiber and heart disease; Sodium and high blood pressure; Fruits and vegetables and some cancers; Folic acid and neural tube birth defects.

Know how. Know **now.**

Product Date: There are two types of product dating: Open Dating and Code Dating. **Open Dating** is stamped on a product package to help the store determine how long to display the product for sale. This date can also help you to know when to buy or use the product for best flavor and quality. There are four types of open dating:

1. **“Sell by”** - This is the last day the product should be sold or used by the store. Usually this date allows for additional storage and use time at home.
2. **“Best if Used By (Before)”** - Use the product by this date for best flavor and quality. This is not a food safety date.
3. **“Expiration Date” or “Use by”** - This is the last day the product should be used or eaten.
4. **“Pack Date”** - This is the date when the food was packaged or processed.

Code Dating is used on foods that can be stored on the shelf for a longer time such as canned or packaged foods. This date is used by manufacturer’s.

A Quick Guide to Reading a Nutrition Facts Label

Start Here

→

Check Calories

Limit these
Nutrients

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)		
Servings Per Container 2		
Amount Per Serving		
Calories 260		Calories from Fat 120
% Daily Value *		
Total Fat	13g	20%
Saturated Fat	5g	25%
Trans Fat	2g	
Cholesterol	30mg	10%
Sodium	660mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate	31g	10%
Dietary Fiber	0g	0%
Sugars	5g	
Protein	5g	
Vitamin A		4%
Vitamin C		2%
Calcium		15%
Iron		4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.		

Quick Guide
to % DV

- 5% or less is low
- 20% or more is high

Sources: The New Food Label: *There’s Something in it for Everybody* by Food and Drug Administration and IFIC Council. *What’s on a Food Label* by KState L-883(Rev.).

This material was funded in part by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-800-430-3244.