

FOOD LABELS 101

The whole point of the food label is to make nutritional information easy to understand, thus steering the public toward a healthier tomorrow. But what do those terms and values actually mean? Which should be higher, the saturated or non-saturated fats? I plan to answer these questions and many more. Once you get the hang of it, nutritional labels are easy to follow and will help you and your family stay healthy.

The following is a basic food label found on an FDA approved product:

Serving Size: A serving size is considered an average portion. All the values listed on the label are based on this amount. Take special note of this because serving sizes are typically smaller than what you may expect.

Calories from fat: You want to choose the foods with the least amount of calories from fat. For each gram of fat one absorbs 7 calories. Higher the fat means higher the calories and may not be as healthy as you had originally thought.

Total fat, Saturated fat, and Cholesterol: The total fat and saturated fats are shown in grams and cholesterol is shown in milligrams. The lower these numbers are the better it is for you. 300 mg is a daily amount of allowable cholesterol.

Sodium: Sodium is shown in mg and is predominant in processed foods. Like the fat and cholesterol, less sodium is best. Products less in sodium are typically from a natural source. Here is a great example: 3 oz of ham has 1,080 mg of sodium while a 3 oz lean piece of pork has 47 mg.

Carbohydrates: Carbs are your dietary fibers and sugars. Look for the higher number of carbohydrates to come from your dietary fibers. These will aid in waste removal and lowering cholesterol levels. One needs to consume at least 25 mg of dietary fiber a day.

Protein: Health advocates tend to believe that you can not have enough protein, when in fact, 45 to 60 grams of protein is plenty for our bodies to function properly. Too much protein can lead to fat storage. Good sources of protein can be found in meat, eggs, fish, poultry and even nuts and beans!

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 3 tbsp (33g) makes 1 cup Servings Per Container 24	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	120
Calories from Fat	0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 25g	8%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A	0%
Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	10%
Iron	50%
Thiamin	10%
Riboflavin	4%
Niacin	6%
Folate	10%
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 65g 80g
Sat. Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

Notice and be cautious of the labeling terminology the company is using to promote its product. The producer of the food wants to make their product stand out above the rest, so “calorie free” does not always mean zero calories. In fact, the product claiming to be calorie free can have up to 5 calories per serving without misrepresenting the product. Make sure to see what a serving size is so that the product may remain within the guidelines of your diet. Sodium free would be 5mg or less and fat free is less than or equal to .5 grams per serving. If the product has 5 pieces and each piece is .5grams of fat per serving and a serving size is one piece, eating all five pieces makes the fat really add up. The same holds true for the word lite or reduced fat. Read those labels closely.

Good luck and let me know if you have any questions! Happy Eating!

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