

Understanding and Using the Nutrition Facts Label

The **Nutrition Facts** label found on packaged foods and beverages is your **daily tool** for making informed food choices that contribute to lifelong healthy eating habits for the whole family. Let's get familiar with the key components.

- 1 Servings Per Container** shows the **total number of servings** in the entire food package or container. It's important to check because one package of food may contain more than one serving.
- 2 Serving Size** is based on the **amount of food that is typically eaten at one time** and is not a recommendation of how much to eat or drink. The nutrition information listed on the label is usually based on one serving of the food; however, some containers may also have information displayed per package.
- 3 Calories** refers to the **total number of calories** in a serving of the food. Calories from food and drinks provide the energy children need to grow and develop. Curious about your child's calorie needs? Check out www.myplate.gov/myplate-plan.

As a general guide:

- **Children age 4 to 8 years:** 1,200 calories per day (sedentary) – 2,000 calories per day (active)
- **Children age 9 to 13 years:** 1,400 calories per day (sedentary) – 2,600 calories per day (active)

The Nutrition Facts label can help you **learn about, compare, and monitor the nutrients** in many foods in your family's diet.

- 4 % Daily Value (%DV)** shows **how much of a nutrient in a serving of the food contributes to a total daily diet**. Use %DV to determine if a serving of the food is high or low in an individual nutrient and to compare food products (make sure the serving size is the same).

As a general guide:

- **5% DV** or less of a nutrient per serving is considered **low**
- **20% DV** or more of a nutrient per serving is considered **high**

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories 230	
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Nutrients to get less of:
Added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat. Compare and choose foods to get less than 100% DV of these nutrients each day.

Nutrients to get more of:
Dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium. Compare and choose foods to get 100% DV of these nutrients on most days.

Learn more about the Nutrition Facts label at: www.FDA.gov/NutritionFactsLabel



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Action Steps for a Healthy Diet

Use the Nutrition Facts label and other parts of the food label to help you make healthy food choices for your family. Small changes can add up and make a big difference!

Eat a variety of colorful vegetables (fresh, frozen, canned, and dried) and 100% vegetable juices. Buy frozen (without butter or sauce) and low sodium or no-salt-added canned vegetables. Try vegetables as snacks, salads, side dishes, and as part of main dishes.

Focus on whole fruits fresh, frozen, dried, and canned in 100% fruit juice). Try fruits as snacks and desserts and add fruits to salads and side dishes. Use fruit to top foods like cereal, pancakes, and yogurt instead of other sweet toppings.

Make at least half your grains whole grains. Look for foods with a whole grain listed as the first or second grain ingredient after water. Try whole grains (such as brown rice, couscous, and quinoa) as side dishes and switch from refined to whole grain versions of commonly consumed foods (such as breads, cereals, pasta, and rice). Limit refined grains and products made with refined grains, especially those high in calories, saturated fat, added sugars, and/or sodium (such as cakes, cookies, chips, and crackers).

Vary your protein routine Try beans, peas, lentils, dairy products, eggs, lean meats and poultry, seafood, soy products, nuts, and seeds. Choose seafood and plant sources of protein (such as soy products, beans, peas, lentils, and unsalted nuts and seeds) in place of some meats and poultry. Add beans, peas, and lentils to salads, soups, and side dishes—or serve them as a main dish. Try a small handful of unsalted nuts or seeds as snacks.

Limit added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat. More often, choose beverages such as water and milk. Limit baked goods, desserts, sweets, and snack foods (such as cakes, cookies, ice cream, chocolate candies, chips, and microwave popcorn). Look for light, low sodium, reduced sodium, or no-salt-added versions of packaged foods, snacks, and condiments. Choose lean meats, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed varieties. Switch from stick margarine to soft margarine (liquid, spray, or tub). Consume smaller portions of foods and beverages that are higher in added sugars, sodium, and/or saturated fat, or consume them less often.

Tips for Parents and Caregivers

- **Lunchtime is a great time to read the label.** Make it a family habit when packing lunches to look at the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods and drinks ... and remind your children to check out the label in the school cafeteria.
- **Measure out single servings of snacks.** When your kids reach for their favorite snacks, challenge them to measure out what they think is one serving. Then have them measure out the serving size according to the label. Keep single servings in resealable plastic bags or containers so you can quickly grab-and-go!
- **Make the shopping list together.** Have your children read the label on food and beverage packages in your pantry and refrigerator and add items to your family's shopping list that are higher in nutrients to get more of and lower in nutrients to get less of.
- **Use Supermarket Smarts.** Take your kids grocery shopping! It's a great chance for them to read the label and compare and contrast their favorite foods and drinks.
- **Learn more about the Nutrition Facts label online.** Encourage your children to hang out with other kids at the [Snack Shack](#) in the virtual world of Whyville and play fun, educational games to practice reading the label and making smart snack choices.