

Reading Food Labels



When you know how to read food labels, you can make healthier choices to help you feel your best. A basic label can tell you about ingredients, calories, sodium, and more.



Arm Yourself with Facts

Some health conditions may require you to limit certain nutrients in your diet, such as phosphorus, potassium, or sodium. A food label can help you:

- See a food's nutritional value.
- Compare foods more easily.
- Stay on track with your specific diet.
- Eat more or less of a particular nutrient



5 Tips for Understanding a Food Label

Nutrition Facts

6 servings per container

Serving size 1 cup (230g)

Amount/serving	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	14%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 8mg	3%
Sodium 210mg	9%

1. **Check the serving size.** The number of servings shows how many portions are in the package. These are listed by grams or milligrams and % Daily Value.
2. **Check the % Daily Value.** This is the average amount of nutrients for someone eating 2,000 calories a day. Choose foods low (5% or less of the Daily Value) in saturated and trans fat and sodium.

Amount/serving	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	14%
Saturated Fat 2g	10%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 8mg	3%
Sodium 210mg	9%

3. **Watch for fat—the good and bad.** Good fats (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated) boost energy and help you absorb vitamins A, D, E, and K. The American Heart Association® (AHA) recommends 13 grams or fewer a day, including less saturated fat and cholesterol, and no trans fat.

Amount/serving	% Daily Value*
Total Carbohydrate 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 7g	25%
Total Sugars 5g	
Protein 11mg	8%

4. **Add fiber.** Fiber keeps you fuller, helps balance blood glucose (blood sugar) levels, and supports weight loss. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends 25–35 grams daily. Look for at least 10% Daily Value on the nutrition facts.

Amount/serving	% Daily Value*
Total Carbohydrate 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 7g	25%
Total Sugars 5g	
Includes 4g Added Sugars 8mg	8%
Protein 11mg	

5. **Limit added sugars.** Sugar, also listed as ingredients ending in “ose” (sucrose and fructose) and corn syrup, can fill you with empty calories and will raise your blood glucose levels.



Why the Ingredients List Matters

The ingredients list shows what’s in the food from the greatest amount to the least, with there always being the most of first ingredient listed. So, if you have diabetes, watch for and avoid foods that list sugar as one of the first ingredients. You’ll also see types of carbohydrate (including fiber and sugar), fat, and possible potassium and phosphorus additives listed. If you have chronic kidney disease (CKD) and need to limit phosphorus, check for and avoid ingredients that have “phos” in the name, such as “phosphoric acid” or “polyphosphate.” These are examples of hidden phosphorus. A good rule of thumb is to choose fewer processed foods with short ingredient lists.

For more diet and nutrition information, visit diabetes.org/kidney.

Talk to your dietitian or doctor about what kind of diet may be right for you and your specific health needs. Diet needs are different for every person based on their health condition, diagnosis and many other things.

