

# Making Sense of Food Labels



When you go food shopping, be sure to read food labels. Reading the labels on food packages can help you choose healthy foods. Sometimes products make nutrition claims on the front of the label. Here are some of the claims you may see, and what they mean:

- \* **“Low Fat”** – 3 grams of fat or less per serving
- \* **“Light” or “Lite”** – product has 1/3 fewer calories or 50% less fat than the original product
- \* **“Low Sodium”** – 140 mg or less of sodium per serving
- \* **“High Fiber”** – 5 or more grams of fiber per serving

## % Daily Value

**A Quick Test** - You can tell if a food is nutritious by looking at the “% Daily Values” in the *Nutrition Facts* box. Our bodies need specific amounts of each nutrient. The “% Daily Value” tells us a food provides a lot of a nutrient, or just a little.

A food that provides half of the total amount of a nutrient we need in a day would a % Daily Value of 50%. Look for foods that have over 10% of your daily value for vitamins and minerals. Choose foods with lower amounts of sodium, fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol.

## Cholesterol

If you are watching your cholesterol, first check the *Nutrition Facts* for saturated fat. This is the type of fat that can cause blood cholesterol to go up. Try to eat fewer than 20 grams of saturated fat a day. Next,

look at the total fat. Try to choose foods that have less than 3 grams of fat per 100 calories. Try to eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol a day.



## High Blood Pressure

If you have high blood pressure, you may want to check the *Nutrition Facts* for sodium. Try to eat less than 2400 mg in a day, and fewer than 800mg at each meal. Watch out for highly processed foods, like some microwave dinners or canned soups. These can be very high in sodium.

## Diabetes

If you have diabetes, reading the *Nutrition Facts* can help you count carbohydrate servings and choose foods with more fiber and less fat.

## Healthy Weight

Eating the amount of calories that is right for you is the first step in getting to your healthy weight. Talk to a Registered Dietitian (RD) to find out how many calories you need each day to reach your healthy weight. Comparing foods using the food label will help you choose foods that fit into your eating plan.

## Choose Balance



When you choose foods remember that you can balance some “high” foods with some “low” foods. That means you can enjoy all foods, just don’t over do it! If you have a higher fat soup, have lower fat bread and vegetables to go with it. ♦

# Let's Look At This Food Label . . .

What can we learn from this food label? First look at the serving size. For this food, the serving size is one cup, and one container of this food has 4 servings. Other things we should look at are:

- ✓ **Fat** – How much fat is in this food? Is it low cholesterol?
- ✓ **Sodium** – Is this a low sodium food?
- ✓ **Fiber** – Would this food be a good source of fiber?
- ✓ **Vitamins and Minerals** – Does this food provide good amounts?

This food is “**Low**” in Cholesterol. It has 20 mg of cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat.

This food is a “**Good Source**” of Fiber and Iron. Good Source means one serving has 10% to 19% of the Daily Value.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 Cup	
Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 130	Calories from Fat 20
<hr/>	
	% Daily Value*
<b>Total Fat</b> 2g	3%
Saturated Fat 1g	4%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 20mg	6%
<b>Sodium</b> 390mg	16%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 18g	6%
Dietary Fiber 4g	17%
Sugars 9g	
<b>Protein</b> 9g	
<hr/>	
Vitamin A 70%	Vitamin C 20%
Calcium 6%	Iron 10%

There are 4 servings in this container. The amounts of fat, fiber, calcium, etc. are based on one serving (1 cup).

It's “**Low Fat.**” It has 3 grams or less of fat per serving.

The food is “**High**” in vitamins A and C because it has 20% or more of the Daily Value in one serving.

State of North Carolina Michael Easley, Governor  
 Department of Health and Human Service Carmen Hooker Odom, Secretary  
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