

## Read the Fine Print

### Check out these additional label tips:

- The **ingredients list** on each label includes virtually every substance in the food, listed by weight from most to least.
- The **serving sizes** on the nutrition table are standardized and tend to be relatively small. This number can help with calorie control if you determine how many servings you want to consume before you start eating.
- Here's a **shortcut**: Read the fat section on the nutrition table — a food that has no more than 3 grams of total fat per serving is considered a low-fat option.
- **Trans fat** is commonly found in processed foods and is used to aid shelf life and retain flavour. Because trans fat adversely affects cholesterol levels, health officials advise that you consume as little as possible. Products generally high in trans fat will list "partially hydrogenated" oil or "hydrogenated" oil. Products with less than 0.2 grams of trans fat and low levels of saturated fat can bear the claim "trans fat-free". Choose foods with fewer than 3 grams of saturated fat and no trans fat whenever possible.
- **Learn the better fats in processed foods**: monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils, including olive, canola, soybean and safflower. Look for these oils on ingredient lists. They are often found in fat-containing foods such as mayonnaise, salad dressing and soft margarine.
- When choosing **grain products**, avoid refined grains and cereals (white flour, white rice) and choose whole grains (whole wheat flour, brown rice, oats) more often.



## See the "Light"

Many label readers rely on descriptive words, such as "low sodium" and "sugar free," to help them avoid unwanted ingredients. These terms can only be displayed on a label if the product meets highly regulated Canadian legal standards. **What these terms mean:**

<b>Calorie Free</b>	Fewer than 5 calories per serving.
<b>Light</b>	25% fewer calories; or half the fat; or half the sodium of the original. Note: Read the fine print when you see the word "light" or "lite" – sometimes it refers to a light colour or texture instead of calories or fat.
<b>Fat Free</b>	Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.
<b>Low Fat</b>	3 grams of fat or less per serving.
<b>Reduced Fat</b>	At least 25% less fat than the original version.
<b>Lean</b>	Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
<b>Extra Lean</b>	Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
<b>Low in Saturated Fat</b>	2 grams or less of saturated fat and trans fat combined, and no more than 15% of calories from the sum of saturated and trans fat.
<b>Cholesterol Free</b>	Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat per serving.
<b>Reduced Cholesterol</b>	At least 25% less cholesterol than the original version and 2 grams or less saturated fat per serving.
<b>Sodium Free</b>	Less than 5 milligrams of sodium.
<b>Low Sodium</b>	140 milligrams or less sodium per serving.
<b>Reduced Sodium</b>	At least 25% less sodium per serving than the original version.
<b>Sugar Free</b>	Less than 0.5 grams of sugar per serving.

**The changing food label:** This brochure contains the basic guidelines for using package food labels. Keep in mind that health officials are continually evaluating and revising food label requirements so that you can make the most informed choices for good health. Read and learn!

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# READING FOOD LABELS

CHOOSING A HEALTHY DIET IS IN THE DETAILS



## LOOK TO LABELS



You can learn a lot about the foods you're buying by reading the package labels. From serving size, calories and fat to ingredients — and health claims — you'll find more information at your fingertips than ever before.

But with so much to digest, labels may seem confusing at first. This brochure can help. For tips on how to read food labels and zero in on your healthy diet goals, read on.

## Cover Story

In 2003, Canada introduced the Nutrition Facts table for nearly all prepackaged foods. Why? To give consumers a better tool to make more informed food choices.

Food labels are required on packaged foods such as breads, cereals, canned and frozen foods, snacks, desserts, drinks, etc. **In addition to the product's common name, food labels must display:**

- **Name and address** of the product's manufacturer
- **Net contents** in terms of weight, measure or count
- **Ingredient list** (on all foods that contain more than one ingredient)
- **Serving sizes**, now standardized for comparison
- **Nutrition Facts** table (at right)

## But Look — There's More

Some labels also display popular terms that help define a food's nutritional value, such as "low fat" and "high fibre". It's optional to make these claims, but foods must meet certain criteria to be able to do so. (Check the back panel of this brochure for a list of these official definitions.)

Once you learn these label reading basics, you'll see how useful the information can be.

## Nutrition Facts Table

You will find the Nutrition Facts table on most packaged and processed foods in supermarket aisles. In the sample diagram here, key sections of this table are coloured with brief explanations.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 2 slices (64 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value*
<b>Calories</b> 140	
<b>Fat</b> 1.5 g	<b>2%</b>
Saturated Fat 0.3 g	<b>4%</b>
+ Trans 0.5 g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0 mg	
<b>Sodium</b> 290 mg	<b>12%</b>
<b>Carbohydrate</b> 26 g	<b>9%</b>
Fibre 3 g	<b>12%</b>
Sugars 2 g	
<b>Protein</b> 5 g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 4%	Iron 10%

### 1 Start Here:

Serving sizes are given in standard household units, such as ml, cups, tablespoons or a unit of food followed by the metric measure, so you can easily compare similar foods on the market. Note that serving sizes are usually smaller than you think so compare it to how much you eat!

### 2 Check Calories:

The number of servings you eat (or drink) determines the number of calories you actually take in (your portion).



## Following food labels

can help you manage your intake of total fat, saturated and trans fat, sodium, cholesterol, and added sugars as outlined in **Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide**. Labels can also help you identify good sources of fibre, vitamins and minerals, and compare serving sizes to control your calories. By reading a label, you can learn, for example, that your favourite cinnamon roll contains 26 grams of fat and 1,200 calories! You might then rethink your choice.

**3 Limit These:** Eating excess saturated or trans fat, sodium or cholesterol is considered a risk for heart disease and other chronic conditions.

**4 Get Enough of These:** Many Canadians don't get enough fibre or may fall short of the vitamins and minerals listed in this space.

The more you use this table, the quicker you can find the key points you want when shopping.

## What About Health Claims?

HIGH FIBRE

Some food labels contain claims linking the potential benefit of a food or nutrient to reducing the risk of several health conditions. **The bottom line:** These claims are carefully regulated and are helpful for those who want choices that may aid in their health efforts.

**Approved health claims are based on these food and health links:**

**Food containing potassium**, but low in sodium: link → reduced risk of high blood pressure

**Food low in (or free of) saturated and trans fats:** link → reduced risk of heart disease

**Food containing calcium, vitamin D, paired with regular physical activity:** link → reduced risk of osteoporosis

**Vegetables and fruits:** link → reduced risk of some types of cancers

Because of these associations, food manufacturers are producing more foods designed to supplement a product's basic nutritional value with added health benefits. **Examples:** juice fortified with calcium and bread enriched with omega-3 fats or extra fibre.

REDUCED CHOLESTEROL