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 panel are standardized and tend to be relatively small. This number can help with calorie control. Determine how many servings you want to consume before you start eating.
- Here's a **shortcut:** Read the fat section on the nutrition panel — a food that has no more than 3 grams of fat per serving is a low-fat option. Foods containing fewer than 3 grams of saturated fat and 0 grams of trans fat are preferable.

- A common ingredient in processed foods is **trans fat,** used to aid shelf life and retain flavor.
  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" vegetable oil or "hydrogenated" oil. Products with less than 0.5 grams of trans fat are considered trans-fat-free. Product labels that list "fully hydrogenated" oils are completely trans fat-free.
- **Learn the best fats in processed foods:** monounsaturated or polyunsaturated oils, including olive, canola, soybean and safflower.
- Labels must list any ingredients that contain **protein** derived from the eight major allergenic foods.
- When choosing **grain products,** shop for less refined breads and cereals — the word "whole" at the top of the ingredients list indicates more unrefined grain in the food, which can help supply additional nutrients and much-needed fiber.

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 U.S. legal standards. **What these terms mean:**

Calorie Free	Fewer than 5 calories per serving.
Light (Lite)	25% fewer calories; or half the fat; or half the sodium of the original.
Fat Free	Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.
Low Fat	3 grams of fat or less per serving.
Reduced Fat	At least 25% less fat than the original version.
Lean	Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
Extra Lean	Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
Low in Saturated Fat	1 gram or less of saturated fat and no more than 15% of calories from saturated fat.
Cholesterol Free	Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat per serving.
Reduced Cholesterol	At least 25% less cholesterol than the original version and 2 grams or less saturated fat per serving.
Sodium Free	Less than 5 milligrams of sodium and no sodium chloride.
Low Sodium	140 milligrams or less sodium per serving.
Reduced Sodium	At least 25% less sodium per serving than the original version.
Sugar Free	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!

PC 51402

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, allergy cautions and even claims about health benefits — 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

Food label standards changed significantly after 1990 with the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act and through the combined efforts of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). 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 panel *(at right)*

But Look — There's More

Labels also display popular terms that help define a food's nutritional value, such as low fat and high fiber. (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 Panel

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

1

Start Here:

Serving sizes are standardized so you can easily compare similar foods on the market. Note that official serving sizes are usually smaller than you think!

2

Check Calories:

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

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

4

Get Enough of These: Many Americans don't get enough fiber or may fall short of the nutrients listed in this space.

5

Footnote: These numbers show how much of the recommended daily amount of a nutrient or fiber is in a serving of the food (using a 2,000-calorie diet as a frame of reference). This statement must be on all nutrition panels, but the lower section of the footnote may be omitted on small packages.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 260	Calories from Fat 120
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 13g	**20%**
Saturated Fat 5g	**25%**
Trans Fat 2g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 660mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* 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

Following food labels

can help you budget your intake of total fat, saturated and trans fat, sodium, cholesterol, and added sugars in line with the current USDA food guidelines. Labels can also help you identify good sources of fiber, vitamins and minerals, and compare serving sizes to control your calories. By reading a label, you can learn, for example, that your favorite cinnamon roll contains 26 grams of fat and 1,200 calories! You might then rethink your choice.

What About Health Claims?

Some food labels contain claims linking the potential benefit of a food or nutrient to reducing the risk of 10 different 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.

Common food and health associations: calcium and osteoporosis; **saturated or trans fat** and cholesterol and heart disease; **fiber** and heart disease; **sodium** and blood pressure; **fruits and vegetables** and cancer; **folic acid** and neural tube defects (brain and spinal cord defects that can occur during the first weeks of pregnancy).

Because of these associations, food manufacturers are producing more **"functional foods"** designed to supplement a product's basic nutritional value with added health benefits. **Examples:** juices fortified with calcium; cereals fortified with folic acid; and milk fortified with calcium and vitamin D.