

Quick Guide to Reading a Nutrition Fact Label

First, it is important to look at “serving size” and to understand that the remainder of the information on the Food Label is for that serving size. Almost always the serving size listed applies to one serving. Next look at “servings contained”. Those 20oz sodas and “individual” bags of chips easily contain 2 to 3 servings for the entire bottle or package. For example, a bag of chips might have 150 calories for one serving, but the bag might contain three servings for a total of 450 calories per bag.

Looking at all the different types of fat on the Food Label can be a bit overwhelming. A good rule of thumb is to keep the % Daily Value (DV) at or below 5%.

A low-sodium food contains 140mg of sodium or less and is ideal for those following a restricted sodium diet. For the general population, I recommend keeping this number between 165-200mg or less. Total maximum daily intake for cholesterol is 300mg and reading the Food Label will help determine if the foods you eat compare to this number. Remember only animal products contain cholesterol, whereas plant based products (unless processed with animal fat or dairy) will be cholesterol free.

If you are not diabetic, then it is better to focus on the fiber and sugar rather than “Total Carbohydrate”. Fiber should be at least 3 grams or higher and the lower the grams of sugar, the better.

Aside from sodium, a good rule of thumb to use with the other vitamins and minerals on the Food Label is to look at %DV – the closer to 10% DV the vitamin or mineral is, the better; if it exceeds 10% DV – fantastic!

Ingredient list – a good rule of thumb to follow is the more recognizable the ingredients and the shorter the list the better as this indicates the food product is not as processed nor uses many preservatives or artificial ingredients.



Sample Label for
Macaroni and Cheese

Start Here

**Limit these
Nutrients**

**Get Enough
of these
Nutrients**

Footnote

Nutrition Facts

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

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 1.5g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
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

**Quick Guide
to % DV**

**5% or less
is low
20% or more
is high**