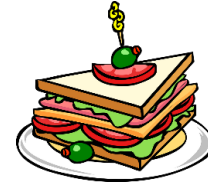


WHAT ARE YOU EATING?



March is designated **National Nutrition Month** by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. This month is dedicated to teaching Americans about the importance of good **nutrition** (how food affects the health of the body), a healthful eating plan, and daily physical activity. Eating a healthy diet and staying active are two very important things you can do every day to help prevent heart disease and other serious medical conditions.

Learning to read and understand food labels will help you make healthy choices that support good nutrition. Think of a nutrition label like the table of contents in a book. The labels let you to know what's inside the food you are eating. Nutrition facts are printed somewhere on the outside of packaged foods and drinks. Most nutrients are measured in **grams (g)** or **milligrams (mg)**, which are metric units of mass or weight. There are 1000 milligrams in 1 gram.

In 2016 the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) updated Nutrition Facts labels on packaged foods and drinks for the first time in over 20 years. The FDA made these changes based on updated scientific information, new nutrition research, and input from the public. This makes it easier for everyone to make informed food choices that contribute to lifelong healthy eating habits. Label changes began in 2020 and continue into 2021.

New Label

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

- 1 The serving size now appears in larger, bold font and some serving sizes have been updated.
- 2 Calories are now displayed in larger, bolder font.
- 3 Daily Values have been updated.
- 4 Added sugars, vitamin D, and potassium are now listed. Manufacturers must declare the amount in addition to percent Daily Value for vitamins and minerals.

image from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-education-resources-materials/new-nutrition-facts-label>



Things to think about when looking at a food label:

- Look at the serving size and calories. How many servings are in the container? The calories and nutrition information listed are usually for one serving, not the entire container. So, if you eat an entire can of soup that contains two servings, you will consume double the calories, fats, sugars, vitamins, and other listed ingredients.
- The percent daily values (%) are based on an adult person eating 2000 calories each day. Depending on a person's age, sex, size, and activity level, their nutritional needs may be higher or lower than 2000 calories. *Even though food labels aren't designed for children, they can still give you a good idea of what is in your food, how many servings there are in the container, and how many calories per serving.*
- The percent values (%) of each nutrient can help you meet your nutrition goals. An important thing to remember is that *5% or less per serving is considered low, and 20% or more is considered high.*
- Be aware of added sugars. Many foods, like fruits, vegetables, and dairy, naturally contain sugars. Other sugars may be added during processing. Some examples of added sugars are high fructose corn syrup, sucrose, dextrose, table sugar, other syrups, honey, or fruit juice. You'll find these included in the list of ingredients.
- Look at the total fat content and compare the different kinds of fat: *saturated, unsaturated, and trans fat*. It is recommended you limit total fat intake to 30% or less of your total calories each day and saturated fat to 10% or less. *Avoid eating trans fats!* Research has shown that trans fats are strongly associated with heart disease. Trans fat is labeled as *hydrogenated* or *partially hydrogenated* oil in the ingredients list.
- Vitamin D and potassium are listed because Americans don't always get enough of these nutrients. Getting enough vitamin D and potassium can decrease the risk of **osteoporosis** (weak, brittle bones) and high blood pressure.
- Calcium and iron are listed because these minerals also decrease the risk of osteoporosis and **anemia** (not enough healthy red blood cells).



ACTIVITY: Compare nutritional labels on some of your favorite the foods to find out what you're really eating!

Materials:

- ✓ 2-4 different packages of food or snacks that you often eat. Consider cookies, cereals, crackers, soups, bread, and even things like ketchup, spaghetti sauce, and milk.
- ✓ Paper and pencil/pen to make a comparison chart. There is an example of a comparison chart below. You can draw a similar chart by hand. (In our example, we used a package of fig cookies and a bag of Brazil nuts.)



Nutrition Facts	Amount/Serving	% DV	Amount/Serving	% DV
	Total Fat 5g		6%	Total Carb. 37g
Sat. Fat 0g		0%	Fiber 4g	14%
Trans Fat 0g			Total Sugars 19g	
Cholesterol 0mg		0%	Incl. 14g Added Sugars	28%
Sodium 80mg		3%	Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 0% • Calcium 2% • Iron 6% • Potassium 4%				

Serving Size 1 package (57g)
Calories per serving **200**



Fig cookies



Brazil nuts

1. Note how many servings are contained in each package and the serving size.
2. How many **calories** are in each serving? Calories are the amount of energy in the food and can come from fat, protein, or carbohydrate.
3. Does your food contain fat? What kind?
4. What about **sodium** (salt) and **cholesterol** (a waxy, fat-like substance found in foods from animal products)? These also should be limited in a healthy diet.
5. **Carbohydrates** are listed as fiber and sugar. Your body needs carbohydrates for energy. Total sugar and added sugar are listed separately.
6. How much **protein** do you get in a serving? Your body needs protein to build and repair itself.
7. Compare vitamin and mineral content: vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.
8. Notice the ingredients, which are listed in order. The food contains more of the ingredients listed first, second, and third. The food will contain less of the ingredients found at the end of the list.
9. If sugar is one of the first ingredients, that food contains a lot of sugar. It may not be a healthy choice.



Foods	Servings/ container	Serving size	Calories	Total fat	Saturated Fat	Trans fat	Sodium (salt)	Cholesterol	
Fig cookies	1	1 pack	200	5g	0	0	80mg	0	
Brazil nuts	22	9 nuts	210	20g	4.5g	0	0	0	
Foods	Total Carbs	Fiber	Total sugar	Added sugar	Protein	Vitamin D	Calcium	Iron	Potassium
Fig cookies	37g	4g	19g	14g	3g	0	2%	6%	4%
Brazil nuts	4g	2g	1g	0	4g	0	4%	4%	4%

This chart compares our two snacks - fig cookies and Brazil nuts.

- The calorie content in a serving of nuts and fig cookies is almost the same, but their nutritional content is very different.
- Most of the calories in the fig cookies are from carbohydrates (37g) with 14g of added sugar.
- The nuts have a high fat content but very little sugar.
- Our bodies will use all o these nutrients differently.

Things to Think About

- ✓ How do your foods compare? Has this new information changed your mind about serving size and the amount of a snack that you will eat?
- ✓ Which of your foods had the most sugar?
- ✓ Were your foods nutritious? Did they have vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium?
- ✓ Are there some snacks that you might avoid now because you found that they contain trans fats (listed as hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils in the list)? Which ones?
- ✓ What facts most surprised you?
- ✓ Make a list of foods that you may want to eat more of and another list of those that you may want to eat less of (or not at all), depending on what you found.



When you are aware of what's in the foods you eat, you have the information needed to make healthy food choices! Use your new knowledge before sitting down to eat and when grocery shopping with your family. Try to select foods that will keep you and your loved ones healthy and strong!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books available from the Washoe County Library System:

[*Are You What You Eat? A Guide to What's on Your Plate and Why*](#) by DK Publishing



[*Choose Good Food! My Eating Tips*](#) by Gina Bellisario

[*Eat Healthy, Feel Great*](#) by William Sears, M.D.

[*Fats for a Healthy Body*](#) by Jillian Powell

[*Healthy Eating: The Best Start in Science*](#) by Helen Orme

[*Healthy Foods from A To Z = Comida Sana de la A a la Z*](#) by Stephanie Maze

[*How to Choose Foods Your Body Will Use*](#) by Rebecca Sionger

[*Kids' Fun and Healthy Cookbook*](#) by Nicola Graimes

[*Mayo Clinic Kids' Cookbook: 50 Favorite Recipes for Fun and Healthy Eating*](#) by Mayo Clinic

[*Our Food: A Healthy Serving of Science and Poems*](#) by Grace Lin

[*See What We Eat! A First Book of Healthy Eating*](#) by Scot Ritchie

[*What's So Yummy? All About Eating Well and Feeling Good*](#) by Robie H. Harris

[*You Want Me to Eat That? A Kids' Guide to Eating Right*](#) by Rachelle Kreisman

[*Yummy Yoga; Playful Poses and Tasty Treats*](#) by Joy Bauer, MS, RDN, CDN

Videos:

American Heart Association, "Food Label Smarts" <https://youtu.be/KlwCAM30NQI>

SciShow Kids, "The 5 Fabulous Food Groups" <https://youtu.be/L9ymkJK2QCU>

TED-Ed, "How the food you eat affects your brain - Mia Nacamulli" <https://youtu.be/xyQY8a-ng6g>

Websites:

Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital, Cholesterol and Your Child

<https://www.hopkinsallchildrens.org/Patients-Families/Health-Library/HealthDocNew/Cholesterol-and-Your-Child>

Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, Nutrition for Kids

<https://www.pcrm.org/good-nutrition/nutrition-for-kids>

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Digital Nutrition Resources for Kids

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/digital-nutrition-resources-kids>

U. S. Food and Drug Administration, The New Nutrition Facts Label <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-education-resources-materials/new-nutrition-facts-label>

