

## Shop Smart – Getting the Facts from Food Labels

Use food labels to your advantage by reading them to find out more about the foods you are choosing to eat. The Nutrition Facts Table found on most food labels will help you:

- Find out which foods are good sources of 13 core nutrients.
- Compare similar foods
- See if the food contains a little (5% Daily Value or less) or a lot (15% Daily Value or more) of a nutrient
- Better manage special diets
- Eat more or less of a nutrient

## How to Read the Nutrition Facts Label

*Start with the serving size*

- Look here for both the serving size (the amount for one serving), and the number of servings in the package.
- Remember to check your portion size to the serving size listed on the label. If the label is one cup and you eat 2 cups, you are getting twice the calories, fat and other nutrients listed on the label.

### *Ingredient List*

- Food companies are required to put the ingredient list on packaged foods in descending order by weight.
- The food contains **more** of the ingredients at the beginning of the list and **less** ingredients at the end of the list.

### *Percent Daily Values can be your Guide*

- You can read the nutrition label to find out how much of a nutrient is in a food but how can you tell if this is a little or a lot of this nutrient.
- The daily values are average levels of nutrients for a person eating 2000 calories per day. Your meal plan may be for more or less than 2000 calories per day therefore you may need more or less than 100% DV.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
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

- 5% or less is low – try to aim low in total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium.
- 15% or more is high – try to aim high in vitamins, minerals and fiber



## ***Nutrient Claims on Labels***

You may see various nutrient content or health claims on products in Canada however it is important to understand what these claims actually mean. Nutrient and health are regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to make sure that all food companies use them accurately.

- ***Nutrient Claims*** describe the amount of a nutrient in a food. Ex. “A good source of iron” “Excellent source of Calcium.” These claims are found on packaged food in the grocery store, often advertised on the front of the package.

<b>Nutrient Content Claim</b>	<b>What does this mean?</b>
Fat Free	The food must have less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.
Low Sodium	The food must have less than 140 mg of sodium per serving.
Reduced Calories	The food must have 25% fewer calories per serving than the food it is being compared to.
No Added Sugar	The food must not have any added sugar however natural sugar may be present in the food.
Contains Omega 3 Fats	The food must have 0.3 grams of omega 3 fats per serving
Good Source of Calcium	The food must have at least 15% of the recommended daily intake of calcium.
High Source of Fiber	The food must have at least 4 grams of fiber per serving.
Lean	The portion of the meat or poultry contains 10% fat or less.

- ***Health Claims*** can help you choose foods that you may want to include as a part of a healthy diet to reduce risk of chronic disease. Examples of various health claims you may find on labels are listed below however always keep in mind that health claims are optional and only highlight a few key nutrients or foods that you still need to refer to the nutrition facts table.
  - *A healthy diet rich in vegetables and fruit may reduce the risk of some types of cancer.*
  - *A healthy diet low in saturated fat may reduce the risk of heart disease.*
  - *A healthy diet containing foods low in sodium and high in potassium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure, a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.*
  - *A healthy diet with adequate calcium and vitamin D and regular physical activity helps to achieve strong bones and reduce the risk of osteoporosis.*

Keep in mind it is important to use health and nutrient claims in combination with the Nutrition Facts Table and the ingredient list.