

You Can Rely on the Food Label

Rest assured, when you see key words and health claims on product labels, they mean what they say as defined by the government. For example:

Key Words

What They Mean

Fat Free	Less than 0.5 gram of fat per serving
Low Fat	3 grams of fat (or less) per serving
Lean	Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams of saturated fat and no more than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving
Light (Lite)	1/3 less calories or no more than 1/2 the fat of the higher-calorie, higher-fat version; or no more than 1/2 the sodium of the higher-sodium version
Cholesterol Free	Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams (or less) of saturated fat per serving

To Make Health Claims About...

The Food Must Be...

Heart Disease and Fats	Low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol
Blood Pressure and Sodium	Low in sodium
Heart Disease and Fruits, Vegetables, Grain Products	Low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, and contain at least 0.6 gram soluble fiber, without fortification, per serving
Heart Disease and Soluble Fiber (such as foods containing whole oats or psyllium)	Low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol, and contain at least 0.75 gram soluble fiber per serving from whole oats or 1.7 g soluble fiber from psyllium husk.

Other claims may appear on some labels.
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How To Read A Food Label



Why Read the Label?

Read the label to help choose foods that make up a healthful diet. Eating a healthful diet can help reduce your risk factors for some diseases. For example, too much saturated fat and cholesterol can raise blood cholesterol (a risk factor for heart disease). Too much sodium may be linked to high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a risk factor for heart attack and stroke.

No one food can make you healthy. In addition to eating healthful foods, stay active, don't smoke, and watch your weight!

Serving Size

Is your serving the same size as the one on the label? If you eat double the serving size listed, you need to double the nutrient and calorie values. If you eat one-half the serving size shown here, cut the nutrient and calorie values in half.

Calories

Are you overweight? Cut back a little on calories! Look here to see how a serving of the food adds to your daily total. A 5'4", 138-lb. active woman needs about 2,200 calories each day. A 5'10", 174-lb. active man needs about 2,900. How about you? (Note: Fat-free is not calorie-free!)

Total Carbohydrate

When you cut down on fat, you can eat more carbohydrates. Carbohydrates are in foods like bread, potatoes, fruits and vegetables. Choose these often! They give you nutrients and energy.

Dietary Fiber

Grandmother called it "roughage," but her advice to eat more is still up-to-date! That goes for both soluble and insoluble kinds of dietary fiber. Fruits, vegetables, whole-grain foods, beans and peas are all good sources and can help reduce the risk of heart disease and cancer.

Protein

Most Americans get more protein than they need. Where there is animal protein, there is also fat and cholesterol. Eat small servings of lean meat, fish and poultry. Use fat-free or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese. Try vegetable proteins like beans, grains and cereals.

Macaroni & Cheese

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%

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	80%
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

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

- Limit these nutrients.
- Get enough of these nutrients.
- 5% or less is low. 20% or more is high.

More nutrients may be listed on some labels.

g = grams (About 28 g = 1 ounce)

mg = milligrams (1,000 mg = 1g)

Total Fat

Aim low: Most people need to cut back on fat! Too much fat may contribute to heart disease and cancer. Try to limit your calories from fat. For a healthy heart, choose foods with a big difference between the total number of calories and the number of calories from fat.

Cholesterol

Too much cholesterol – a second cousin to fat – can lead to heart disease. Challenge yourself to eat less than 300 mg each day.

Sodium

You call it "salt," the label calls it "sodium." Either way, it may add up to high blood pressure in some people. So, keep your sodium intake low – less than 2,400 mg each day (100% Daily Value).

Daily Value

Feel like you're drowning in numbers? Let the Daily Value (DV) be your guide. A food with 5% DV or less has a small amount of the nutrient; 20% DV or more is a lot. For fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium, choose foods with a low % DV and don't go over 100% for the day. For total carbohydrate, dietary fiber, vitamins and minerals, your DV goal is to reach 100% of each.

Daily Values in the footnote are listed for people who eat 2,000 or 2,500 calories each day. If you eat more than 2,000 calories, your personal DV goals may exceed 100%. If you eat less, your personal DV goals will be lower.

Saturated Fat

A new kind of fat? No – saturated fat is part of the total fat in food. It is listed separately because it's the key player in raising blood cholesterol and your risk of heart disease. Eat less!

Vitamins & Minerals

Your goal here is 100% of each for the day. Don't count on one food to do it all. Let a combination of foods add up to a winning score. New guidelines say teenagers need 1,300 mg of calcium per day (130% of Daily Value). Women after menopause need 1,500 mg of calcium (150% of Daily Value). 100% DV for calcium is 1,000 mg.



The guidelines in this brochure are for healthy adults and children aged 2 or older. A low-fat diet may be harmful to children younger than 2. For information on special diets, contact your physician or a Registered Dietitian (R.D.) or a Licensed Nutritionist.

For more information on nutrition, heart health and disease, contact your nearest American Heart Association or call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or online at www.americanheart.org.