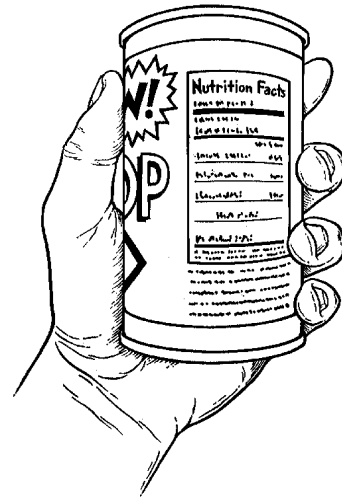


How Do I Read Food Labels?

When you go grocery shopping, take time to read the nutrition labels on your purchases. Compare nutrients and calories in one food to those in another. The information may surprise you. You want to make sure that you aren't bringing home foods high in saturated fat and cholesterol!

One easy way to do “healthier” grocery shopping is to spend more time in the outer aisles of the store where fresh foods are kept. Spend less time in the middle aisles where packaged foods, snacks and soft drinks are stocked.



How do I read the label?

- Most foods in the grocery store must now have a nutrition label and list of ingredients.
- Claims like “low cholesterol” and “fat free” can be used only if a food meets legal standards set by the government.
- The “Nutrition Facts” label contains this information:
 - Serving Size — If you eat double the serving size listed, you need to double the calories, fat and nutrients. If you eat half the size shown, cut the calories and nutrients in half.
 - Calories — This is very helpful to know if you’re cutting calories to lose weight.
 - Total Fat — Most people need to cut back on calories and fat! Too much fat may contribute to heart disease and cancer. The label gives you the number of grams of fat per serving (so you can track your daily intake) and the number of calories from fat. If you are overweight or trying to lose weight, your goal is an overall intake of no more than 25 to 35 percent of your total calories from fat, with less than 7 percent as saturated fat and less than 1 percent as trans fat. You should keep track of the amount of calories you consume and the amount of calories you burn.
 - Saturated Fat — This is one part of the total fat in food. It’s a key nutrient for raising your blood cholesterol and your risk of heart disease and stroke. Eat less saturated fat!
 - Cholesterol — Too much of it in your diet may lead to too much of it in your blood. And too much cholesterol in your blood can lead to heart disease and stroke. It’s best to eat less than 300 mg each day. People with heart disease, high LDL cholesterol levels or who are taking cholesterol medication should consume less than 200 mg of cholesterol per day.
 - Sodium — Watch for both natural and added sodium. Ordinary table salt is sodium chloride — 40 percent sodium by weight. Healthy adults should take in less than 2,300 mg of sodium each day. That’s equal to about 1 tsp. of salt. Some people — African Americans, middle-

- aged and older adults, and people with high blood pressure — need less than 1,500 mg per day.
- Total Carbohydrate — Emphasize fruits and vegetables, and whole-grain breads and cereals.
- Dietary Fiber — Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, peas and beans are good sources and can help reduce the risk of heart disease.
- Protein — Where there’s animal protein, there’s also fat and cholesterol. Eat small portions.
- Vitamins and Minerals — Eating a variety of foods will help you reach your daily goal of 100 percent of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron.
- Daily Value — The daily values are guides for people who eat 2,000 calories each day. If you eat more or less than that, your daily value may be higher or lower. Choose foods with a low % daily value of fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium. Try to reach 100 percent of the daily value of total carbohydrates, dietary fiber, vitamins and minerals.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It’s very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.
3. For more information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit online at StrokeAssociation.org. We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor. For example:

How many fat grams should I have each day?

How many calories should I eat?
