

# How to Read Nutrition Labels

A Simple Guide for Beginners

DailyCoreWellness

## Introduction

Nutrition labels provide useful information about packaged foods and drinks. You can use them to check serving size, calories, protein, fiber, sugar, sodium, fat, and other nutrients. This guide keeps the process simple so you can make more informed food choices.

## 1. Start With the Serving Size

The serving size is one of the first things to check. Nutrition information is usually based on one serving. A package can contain more than one serving, so check how many servings are in the container. If you eat two servings, you generally consume twice the calories and nutrients listed for one serving.

## 2. Check the Calories

Calories show the amount of energy provided by one serving. Use the calorie number together with the other nutrition information. Your individual calorie needs can be higher or lower than general reference values, depending on factors such as age, body size, and activity level.

## 3. Look at Protein and Fiber

Protein supports muscles and many body functions. Fiber supports digestive health and can help you feel full. When comparing similar foods, checking protein and dietary fiber can help you identify more nutrient-dense options. Beans, lentils, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds are common sources of fiber.

## 4. Check Sugar and Added Sugar

Total sugars include naturally occurring sugars and any added sugars. Added sugars are sugars added during processing or preparation. When comparing similar products, check the added sugar amount and the ingredient list. Foods and drinks can contain added sugar even when they do not taste extremely sweet.

## 5. Check Sodium

Sodium is commonly found in salt and many packaged foods. Check the sodium amount when comparing products such as canned foods, instant noodles, sauces, processed meats, snacks, and ready-to-eat meals. Choosing lower-sodium options can help you manage your overall sodium intake.

## 6. Understand Fat

Nutrition labels may show total fat, saturated fat, and trans fat. Fat is an important nutrient, but the type matters. When comparing foods, pay attention to saturated and trans fat as well as the overall food quality.

## 7. Read the Ingredients List

Ingredients are generally listed by weight, with ingredients present in larger amounts appearing earlier. The ingredients list can help you identify added sugars, whole grains, oils, allergens, and other ingredients in the product.

## 8. Understand % Daily Value

The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in one serving contributes to a general daily diet. As a quick guide, 5% DV or less is considered low and 20% DV or more is considered high on U.S. Nutrition Facts labels. Use this as a general reference rather than a personal medical recommendation.

### Quick Nutrition Label Checklist

| Check                | What to Look For                                        |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Serving size</b>  | How much the listed nutrition information represents    |
| <b>Calories</b>      | Energy provided per serving                             |
| <b>Protein</b>       | Amount of protein per serving                           |
| <b>Fiber</b>         | Dietary fiber per serving                               |
| <b>Sugar</b>         | Total sugar and added sugar                             |
| <b>Sodium</b>        | Amount of sodium per serving                            |
| <b>Fat</b>           | Total, saturated, and trans fat                         |
| <b>Ingredients</b>   | What the food is made from                              |
| <b>% Daily Value</b> | How much a nutrient contributes to a general daily diet |

## How to Read a Label in 30 Seconds

Start with the serving size. Then check calories, protein, fiber, added sugar, sodium, and saturated fat. Finish by looking at the ingredients list. You do not need to study every number. Focus on the information that matters most for your food choices.

## Important Reminder

Nutrition labels are a general food-information tool. Individual nutrition needs vary. If you have a medical condition or specific dietary requirements, speak with a qualified healthcare professional or registered dietitian for personalized advice.

Source note: This guide is based on general Nutrition Facts label guidance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

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