

Employee Worksheet

Nutrition Facts Labels

Fit & Fun Families

Nutrition Facts Labels **Using the Labels for Personal Wellness!**

Why?

The food label information is intended to help us plan a healthier, nutritious diet.

A recent poll⁽¹⁾ shows half (51%) of the adults surveyed always or very often refer to food labels when making food choices for themselves or their families.

⁽¹⁾Wall Street Journal/Harris Interactive,
Health-Care Poll, Vol. 5, Issue 17, Oct 2006

Survey Says (1)

A recent survey found the top three reasons adults read labels are to:

1. Follow a balanced, nutritious diet. (39%)
2. Manage a medical condition such as diabetes, high cholesterol, or blood pressure. (23%)
3. Lose weight. (19%)

How?

How can you use the *Nutrition Facts* food label effectively?

The Nutrition Label will help you

- Identify serving sizes.
- Choose foods with more fiber and whole grains.
- Balance choices for a diet plan that is lower in fat, saturated fat, *trans* fat and cholesterol.
- Choose foods with less added sugar and salt.
- Recognize foods rich in Vitamin A and C, calcium, and iron.

Survey Says

While there is much to be gained by using the food label, a recent study found many of the participants were confused about using label information.

American Journal of Preventive Medicine, November 2006; 31(5).

How?

The first and a key step in using the label information, is to *understand the serving size and number of servings.*



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How?

Understand how the serving size and number of servings listed on the label relates to the way YOU eat.

All of the nutrition facts are based on ONE serving, but how many of us eat exactly the amount identified as one serving on the label?

If there are 2 servings in a container, but you usually eat the whole container as a serving, then you are getting two times as much of all the nutrients listed.

For example, if the label reads:

Servings Per Container: 2

Calories: 250

If you eat the whole container, you are consuming 2 servings and 500 calories

(2 servings x 250 calories = 500 calories)

You can't always tell the number of servings by looking at the container size. Even some small containers have more than one serving.

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%
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

How?

Check your serving size habits.

Do you usually eat the serving size listed on the container? Use the chart below to compare what you normally eat with the *Nutrition Fact* serving size.

Directions:

1. List some of the foods you eat often.
2. Place what you normally eat on a plate or in a beverage container. Measure the amount and record it under "the amount I usually eat".
3. Read the *Nutrition Fact* serving size and record it in the chart.
4. Determine the number of servings you usually eat by dividing the amount you usually eat (2) by the *Nutrition Fact* serving size (3). See example in the following chart.



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(1) Foods I often eat	(2) The amount I usually eat	(3) The <i>Nutrition Fact</i> serving size	(4) The number of servings I usually eat
Brand X Spanish Rice	1 cup	1/2 cup	2 servings (1 cup ÷ 1/2 cup)

How?

It won't be necessary to take the calculator along with you every time you go to the grocery store. With a good understanding of how MUCH you eat of the foods that are consumed the most often, you will be able to make healthier choices with calories, fat, sugar, fiber, and whole grains.

Additional Tips

Choose foods with more fiber and whole grain.

Whole grain foods cannot always be identified by the name (such as multi-grain or wheat). Along with grams of fiber on the *Nutrition Facts* label, look for the "whole" grain listed first in the ingredient list.



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Balance choices for a diet plan that is lower in fat, saturated fat, *trans* fat and cholesterol.

- Compare and choose products that are lower in *trans* fats. Although currently there are no guidelines on the amount of *trans* fat as a daily limit, try to eat as little as possible.
- Compare and choose products that are lower in saturated fat and cholesterol. General recommendations (based on a 2000 calorie diet) are no more than 20 grams saturated fat, and 300 mg cholesterol per day.
- *Balance* choices for a lower fat intake. *Balance* is a key word. If you make some higher fat choices, balance them with lower fat foods. General recommendations for total fat (based on a 2000 calorie diet) are no more than 65 grams per day.

Choose foods with less added sugar.

The grams of sugar listed on the label include both naturally occurring sugar, and added sugar. In addition to the *Nutrition Facts* label, read the ingredient list and choose foods without sugar as one of the first ingredients. Added sugars such as sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn or maple syrup add calories, but not vitamins and minerals.

Resources

U. S. Food and Drug Administration: *Food Labeling and Nutrition*

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~acrobat/nutfacts.pdf>

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) *Nutrition Facts Label* brochure identifies 6 label reading actions you can take to keep you on the path to wellness.

Food and Drug Administration: *Make Your Calories Count* <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~ear/hwm/labelman.html>

To help you plan a healthful diet while managing calories, The FDA has put together a *Make Your Calories Count* interactive learning module.

