

Reading Food Labels 101

When you're at the grocery store it's hard to take the extra minute to look at the food labels of the items you're buying. But reading the label is really the only way to know for sure what you're eating. This cheat sheet will make the process a little easier:

Check the serving size, particularly how many servings there are in the container. If there are 2 and you eat the whole container, you're eating double the calories that are on the label!

Try to minimize saturated and trans fat. These are both bad fats that clog arteries.

Get enough fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium and iron.

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)			
Serving Per Container 2			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110		
% Daily Values*			
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

This list gives percentages that are based on recommended daily allowances based on a 2,000 calorie per day diet. For example, a label may show that a serving of the food provides 30 percent of the daily recommended amount of fiber. This means you may need another 70 percent to meet the recommended goal. Remember this is just an estimate, but it serves as a good guide.

The less cholesterol and sodium you eat, the better. The latest recommendation for sodium is less than 2300 mg per day for adults and even less for kids, depending on their age.

Try to keep these low. More sugar means more calories.