

Nutrition Facts Label *(from Nutrition 101, Lesson 1)*

Suggestions for Use in Training

Use this handout for group training on nutrition education.

Quick Tips for Understanding a Food Label

For a healthier you, use this tool to help you make smart food choices quickly and easily.

Try the following tips:

- Look at the serving size and how many servings you are actually eating. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories and nutrients, including the percent of the daily values (DV) of the nutrients.
- Make your calories count. Look at the calories on the label and compare them with the nutrients you are also getting to decide whether the food is worth eating. When one serving of a single food item contains over 400 calories per serving, it is high in calories.
- Keep these fats low: saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, and sodium.
- Get enough of these nutrients: potassium, fiber, vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron.
- Use the % Daily Value (DV) column when possible: 5% DV or less is low, 20% DV or more is high. Check servings and calories.

Quick Tips

Limit Sugars

Since sugars contribute calories with few, if any nutrients, look for foods and beverages low in added sugars. Read the ingredient list and make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few ingredients. Some names for added sugars (caloric sweeteners) include sucrose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, corn syrup, maple syrup, and fructose.

Know Your Fats

Look for foods low in saturated fats, trans fats, and cholesterol to help reduce the risk of heart disease (5% DV or less is low, 20% DV or more is high). Most of the fats you eat should be polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. Keep total fat intake between 20% and 35% of calories.

Nutrition Facts Label, continued

Reduce Sodium, Increase Potassium

Research shows that eating less than 2,300 milligrams of sodium (about 1 teaspoon of salt) per day may reduce the risk of high blood pressure. Most of the sodium people eat comes from processed foods, not from the salt shaker. Also, look for foods high in potassium, which counteracts some of sodium's effects on blood pressure.

Reference:

National Food Service Management Institute. (2005). *Nutrition 101: A taste of food and fitness*. University, MS: Author.

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