

# Understanding Food Labels

What can I use the Nutrition Facts label for?

- ▶ Getting a general idea about what's in a food (i.e. how nutritious a food is).
- ▶ Figuring out what counts as one serving and how many calories are in each serving.
- ▶ Comparing two similar products to choose the healthiest option.

**1 START HERE**  
Start by checking what counts as one serving size and how many servings there are per package.

**2 CHECK CALORIES:**  
How many calories would you eat if you ate a whole package?  
*Multiply the number of "servings per container" by the "calories."*

**3 LIMIT THESE NUTRIENTS**  
Aim to eat only small amounts of saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium. Keep *transfat* to 0.

**4 GET ENOUGH OF THESE NUTRIENTS**  
Aim to get enough fiber, vitamins and minerals.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	10%
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	20%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

**5 QUICK GUIDE TO % DAILY VALUE**  
·5% or less is Low  
·20% or more is High.  
Use the % Daily Value to compare similar foods and choose the healthiest option.

## Watch out for these common misconceptions:

- ▶ Assuming sugar-free or fat-free means calorie-free; it's not true!
- ▶ Buying something because it says "organic", "natural", "multigrain" or has some other "healthy" claim. These statements do not mean a product is good for you!
- ▶ Assuming that because a package looks like it should only be one serving it actually is. Many beverage bottles and packages of chips, cookies and candy are actually 2 or 3 servings!

Resources: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm20026097.htm>