

HOW TO READ FOOD LABELS

Labels on food products provide a lot of information about the food we eat. There are two types of food labels:

- Ingredients are listed on the packages by the amount of the ingredients that are in the product. If flour is the first ingredient listed, then there is more flour used to make the product than any other ingredient.
- Nutrition labels show the nutrition facts. Nutrition facts include:
 - Serving Size
 - Calories
 - Nutrients
 - Footnote

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 cookies (28g)	Servings Per Container about 8
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 140	Calories from Fat 60
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 7g	11%
Saturated Fat 6g	29%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 85mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 19g	6%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 13g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 0%	Iron 2%
*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
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

1. SERVING SIZE

The first information to note when you look at a Nutrition Facts label is the serving size and the number of servings in the package. Serving sizes are standardized to make it easier to compare similar foods. The size of the serving on the food package defines the number of calories and all of the nutrient amounts listed on the top part of the label.

2. CALORIES

Calories provide a measure of how much energy you get from a serving of the food. Calories from fat are calories derived solely from fat. Most experts recommend that you choose foods with less than 30% of calories coming from fat. Keep in mind that the number of servings you consume determines the number of calories you actually eat (your portion amount).

3. NUTRIENTS

This section of the label gives you information about key nutrients found in the food we eat. The nutrients listed first are the ones Americans generally eat in adequate amounts, or even too much, and should be limited in a healthy diet. Eating too much fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, or sodium may increase your risk of certain chronic diseases, like heart disease, some cancers, or high blood pressure.

The nutrients listed second are the ones that many Americans don't get enough of, including dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron. Eating enough of these nutrients can improve health and help reduce the risk of some diseases and conditions.

4. FOOTNOTE

The % Daily Value heading on the Nutrition Facts label is explained in the footnote at the bottom of the label. Percent Daily Values indicate the amount of the nutrients listed on the label that you should eat, depending on your calorie intake. Five percent or less of the % Daily Value is considered low, whereas 20% or more is considered high.

ACTIVITY:

Collect labels from the cans and boxes of a variety of products. Bring them to your Girl Scout meeting.

- Copy down the information above from each label.
- Discuss with your troop how this information can help you make smart food choices.
- Compare the differences in amounts of serving sizes.
- Which foods are higher in fiber, calories, vitamins, protein and sugar?

Program Reference: Girl Scouts of the USA (2001) "Compare Food Labels". Junior Girl Scout Handbook (123).