



Understanding Food Labels

Since 2005 Canadian companies have been required to list the nutrition content of pre packaged foods they manufacture in the “uniform” format you see on all prepackaged foods called the “Nutrition Facts” Label.

Labels are required but not limited to list Calories along with 13 nutrients: Fat, Saturated fat, Trans fat, Cholesterol, Sodium, Carbohydrate, Fiber, Sugars, Protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium and Iron.

- A. Look at the “**servicing size**” and compare it to how much you actually eat. Serving sizes are not regulated to match those of Canada’s food guide but must be listed in a measurable format.
- B. Use the “**% Daily Value**” to see if a food has a little or a lot of a nutrient. The % Daily Value provides a quick overview of the nutrient profile of the food, allowing product comparisons based on more than one nutrient. It puts nutrients on the same scale (0% - 100% Daily Value). You can quickly identify the strengths and weaknesses of a food product.
- C. **Calories**” is a term used to describe the energy content of foods. Our bodies require a constant production of energy to help us walk, talk and play. The energy comes from the food we eat.
- D. **“Fats”** are vitally important to our body. There are 2 kinds of fats – saturated and unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fats are the “good fats” and there are 2 kinds of them too. Firstly there are polyunsaturated fats which are the omega 3 and omega 6 fats. They are essential fats which your body can’t do without. They are essential for the brain and help reduce the risk of many health dangers such as cancer and heart disease. The second good fat is monounsaturated fat. This isn’t an essential fat but is good for you. Some studies have shown that monounsaturated fats can help lower the bad LDL cholesterol level in the blood.
- E. The Institute of Medicine recommends that you limit your “**sodium**” intake to 1000 milligrams for children aged 1 to 3, 1200 mg for children aged 4 to 8, 1500 mg for people aged 9 to 50.
- F. **Carbohydrates** are our body’s major source of energy. There are 2 types of carbohydrates: simple and complex. It is recommended that you aim to eat more complex carbs because they are unrefined and therefore are not stripped of their fiber and nutrients.
- G. **Proteins** are the building blocks of the body. The body breaks the protein we eat down into amino acids of which there are 25 kinds. Amino acids are used to build muscle, repair cells and make hormones.
- H. **Vitamin A** is essential for maintaining healthy eyes and preventing infection but if you’re taking multiple supplements such as a multi-vitamin or fortified cereal then it’s easy to go overboard. This can result in headaches, dry skin or nerve damage.
- I. **Vitamin C** is added to all sorts of foods by manufacturers which makes it easy to get too much of this disease fighting antioxidant. The recommended intake varies by age and is between 400mg and 2000mg per day. Anything more than 2000mg could cause serious gastrointestinal problems.
- J. **Calcium** in the bloodstream plays an important role in blood clotting, transmission of nerve impulses, muscle contraction, and other metabolic activities. The recommended intake for **calcium** varies with age and is between 200mg to 1200mg
- K. **Iron** is a component of red blood cells and the muscles that assist in the transportation of oxygen throughout the body. The recommended intake for **iron** is between 6mg and 12mg and also varies by age.

Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive

Per 125 mL (87 g) / par 125 mL (87 g)

Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 80	
Fat / Lipides 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g + Trans / trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 18 g	6 %
Fibre / Fibres 2 g	8 %
Sugars / Sucres 2 g	
Protein / Protéines 3 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	2 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	10 %
Calcium / Calcium	0 %
Iron / Fer	2 %

Did You Know?



Nutrition Fact Labels can be used to:

1. Compare products more easily.
2. Determine the nutritional value of foods.
3. Better manage special diets.
4. Increase or decrease intake of a particular nutrient.