

figuring out food labels

Reading labels can help you make wise food choices. Most packaged foods in the grocery store list nutrition information on the package in a section called the 'Nutrition Facts'.

The Nutrition Facts tell you the serving size and the amount of various nutrients such as total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and fibre per serving.

All packaged foods must have an ingredient list on their food labels. The list of ingredients shows the ingredients in descending order by weight so you can roughly work how much of the ingredient the food contains. Some packaged foods show the percentage of the key ingredients or components in the food product. For example, 'Contains 5% real fruit'.

Foods that are exempt from the label include foods in very small packages, foods prepared in the store, and foods made by small manufacturers.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2 crackers (14 g)	
Servings Per Container About 21	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 60	Calories from Fat 15
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 70mg	3%
Total Carbohydrate 10g	3%
Dietary Fiber Less than 1g	3%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 2g	
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 2400mg 2400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

What should I look for?

Serving Size	This is the serving size of the product; however, it may not be the same as the serving size that you have so use this as a guide only. Use the '100g' figure when comparing the nutritional contents of products, for example, which product is lower in saturated fat?
Low in Saturated Fat	The total fat is the number of fat grams contained in one serving of the food. This includes all polyunsaturated, monounsaturated and saturated fat in the food. Use the figure 'per 100g' to compare products and choose the one with least saturated fat .
Low in Sugar	The Carbohydrate Total includes both the sugars and starches in food. Use this figure to find out how much carbohydrate you are eating by looking at how many carbohydrate grams are in one serving of food. Sugars: This tells you how much of the total carbohydrate is sugar. This will include added sugar as well as naturally occurring lactose (milk sugar) and fructose (fruit sugar). Sugar content alone will not predict the effect of the food on your blood glucose level.
High in Fibre	Dietary fibre only appears on the Nutrition Information Panel if the manufacturer makes a claim about the foods fibre (eg. 'high fibre'), or sugar content (eg. 'Low sugar'). Canadian adults should aim to eat around 30g of fibre each day. Remember this when comparing products and, where possible, choose the one that is higher in fibre.
Low Sodium (salt)	Where possible, choose products with reduced or no added salt. A low salt food has less than 120mg of sodium per 100g.

Did you know?

Often claims made on the packaging of food can be misleading so it is important that you always read the Nutrition Panel to get the correct information. Some of these include:

No added sugar – These products do not contain any refined sugars such as fructose, honey or glucose, however it does not mean that they are lower in natural energy than a product with added sugar as they still may contain natural sugars. eg. fruit juices.

Lite or Light – This often refers to a reduced fat content but may also describe taste, texture or colour. Check the label for an explanation of this claim.

Cholesterol free or low cholesterol – Because cholesterol is produced in the liver, it is only found in foods that contain animal products, therefore, it will not be found in plant foods such as avocado.

Remember 'cholesterol free' does not mean 'fat free' or low in saturated fat. Overall, it is more important to eat a meal plan that is low in saturated fat than one that is low in cholesterol.

Always double check the ingredient list and the Nutrition Information Panel to back up any claim.

http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_fit/nutrition/food_labels.html
<http://www.diabetes.org/nutrition-and-recipes/nutrition/foodlabel.jsp>
Healthy Shopping Guide 2005 – Good Medicine and Diabetes Australia

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