

WALK WITH a DOC Healthy Living Series

READING FOOD LABELS

When you're picking out items in the grocery store, you should assume that the words on the front of the package like "all natural" and "healthy" are only trying to get you to buy the product. By turning it over and reading the food label, we can make informed choices about the food we eat. All of the strange words and numbers might seem confusing, so let's break down an example food label to make it a little bit easier to consume.

SERVING SIZE is the amount that people typically eat or drink (not necessarily the recommended amount). All the other numbers on the label are based on the serving size, so pay attention to how many servings you're eating.

CALORIES provide a measure of how much energy you get from one serving of this food. To achieve or maintain a healthy body weight, balance the number of calories you eat and drink in a day with the number of calories your body uses.

NUTRIENTS should be based on your own personal dietary needs but in general:

Aim for Less (Lower %DV)

- Sodium
- Fat: Avoid trans fats, limit saturated fats and cholesterol
- Added Sugars (a.k.a. fructose, sucrose, corn syrup, molasses)

Aim for More (Higher %DV)

- Dietary Fiber, Vitamin D, Calcium, Iron, and Potassium

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (227g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	280
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 9g	12%
Saturated Fat 4.5g	23%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 35mg	12%
Sodium 850mg	37%
Total Carbohydrate 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 6g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 15g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 320mg	25%
Iron 1.6mg	8%
Potassium 510mg	10%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.



The **% Daily Value (% DV)** is the percentage of the Daily Value for each nutrient in a serving of the food. They are reference amounts of nutrients to consume or not to exceed each day.

As a general rule for each serving, 5% DV or less is considered low and 20% DV or more is considered high.

The %DV uses guidelines based on a 2,000 calorie diet, but your specific calorie needs are based on your age, sex, height, weight, and physical activity level. Learn your estimated calorie needs at choosemyplate.gov

INGREDIENTS will also be listed on the label in order of **largest to smallest** component in the food. The easier the words are to pronounce and the shorter the list is, the better.

One of the healthiest things you can do is to avoid foods that require labels and ingredient lists in the first place by eating a whole food, predominantly plant-based diet.

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<https://www.fda.gov/food/new-nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label>