

Portion Size and Nutritional Labels

The important thing about changing your diet and controlling your portions is making sure you can read and understand nutritional labels. Many foods contain hidden calories, fat, sugar, and “bad” carbohydrates. You can avoid and replace these with healthier options. On the label, look for these basics to understand what you are actually buying:

Sample label for Macaroni & Cheese

Nutrition Facts

Start Here → Serving Size 1 cup (228g)
Servings Per Container 2

Check Calories → **Amount Per Serving**

Calories 250 Calories from Fat 110

% Daily Value*

Limit These {	Total Fat 12g	18%
	Saturated Fat 3g	15%
	<i>Trans</i> Fat 3g	
	Cholesterol 30mg	10%
	Sodium 470mg	20%
	Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
	Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
	Sugars 5g	
	Protein 5g	
Get Enough of these Nutrients {	Vitamin A	4%
	Vitamin C	2%
	Calcium	20%
	Iron	4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

Footnote {

	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

Quick Guide to % DV

- 5% or less is Low
- 20% or more is High

- **Serving Size:** The most important part of the nutritional label is the serving size. Use the serving size listed on the label to control your portions. All the information listed on the label is based on this serving size. For example if the serving size is 1 cup and it lists 140 calories that means you will be consuming 280 calories if you eat two serving sizes. This is the first item listed on the label. Usually it lists the serving size and the number of servings that are in the package you are buying.
- **Calories:** Calories are the amount of energy you get from one serving. In general, the average person should eat around 2000 calories a day. However, many people such as women and older adults should consume less than 2000 calories daily.
- **Other Nutrients:** It is very important to get enough fiber, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C. These help overall health and bone structure. Diets rich in these nutrients help reduce the effects of heart disease. On the other hand, you want to limit cholesterol, sodium, fat, saturated fat, and trans fat. All these nutrients can lead to weight gain and increase the effects and risks of many conditions including heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.
- **Footnote:** The footnote at the bottom of the nutritional label shows suggested daily values for diets that are 2000 and 2500 calories. If your daily calories are less than these numbers, your daily values should be less as well.

