About Food Labeling

Since 1994 food manufacturers have been required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to include food labels (or **Nutrition Facts** labels) on product packaging so that consumers have accurate nutritional information about the food they purchase. But food labels are more than just a federal requirement – once you **understand the information they provide**, you can use food labels as a **guide to planning** healthier meals and snacks.

Food labels are required on almost all foods, except those that don't provide many nutrients such as coffee, alcohol and spices. Although some restaurants provide information about the food they serve, they aren't required to have labels. The FDA recommends that sellers provide nutritional information on produce, meat, poultry and seafood, but it's strictly voluntary.

Scientific evidence shows that consumption of **saturated fat, trans fat, and dietary cholesterol** raises low-density lipoprotein (**LDL**), or "bad" cholesterol, levels, which increases the risk of **coronary heart disease** (CHD). According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health, more than 12.5 million Americans have CHD, and more than 500,000 die each year. That makes CHD one of the **leading causes of death** in the United States.

With trans fat added to the Nutrition Facts panel, you will know for the first time how much of all three--saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol--are in the foods you choose. Identifying saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol on the food label gives you information you need to **make food choices that help reduce the risk of CHD**. This revised label will be of particular interest to people concerned about high blood cholesterol and heart disease.

Label Lingo

- **Lite:** Contains 1/3 the calories or 1/2 the fat per serving of the original version or a similar product
- **No calories or calorie free:** Contains less than 5 calories per serving
- **Low calories:** Contains 1/3 the calories of the original version or a similar product

- **No fat or fat free:** Contains less than 1/2 gram of fat per serving
- **Lower or reduced fat:** Contains at least 25 percent less per serving than the reference food. (An example might be reduced fat cream cheese, which would have at least 25 percent less fat than original cream cheese.)
- **Low fat:** Contains less than 3 grams of fat per serving

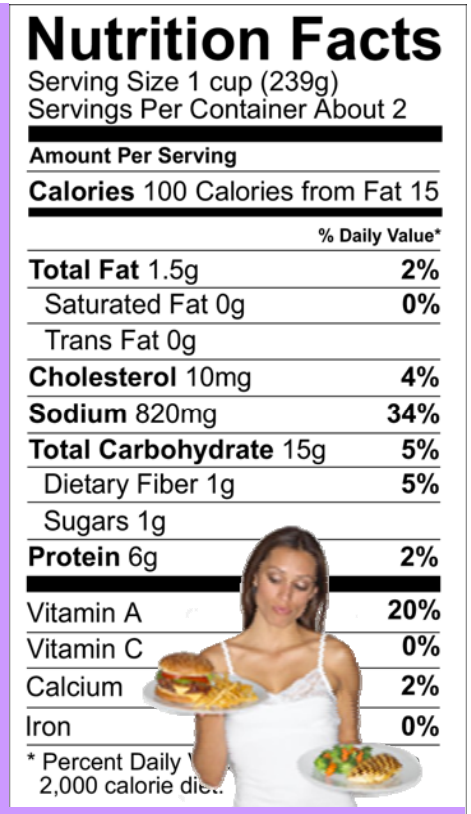
- **Sugar free:** Contains less than 1/2 gram of sugar per serving
- **Reduced sugar:** At least 25% less sugar per serving than the reference food

- **High fiber:** 5g or more per serving (Foods making high-fiber claims must meet the definition for low fat, or the level of total fat must appear next to the high-fiber claim)
- **Good source of fiber:** 2.5g to 4.9g. per serving
- **More or added fiber:** Contains at least 2.5g more per serving than the reference food

Answer

If you answered "100" then you forgot that the can contains **two servings**. There are 100 calories in a single serving, so the can contains **200 calories** total.

How to read and use the



A ***quick guide*** to understanding what's on the **Nutrition Facts** label and how you can use that information to make good food choices.

For more information see the following Web sites:

Dept. of Health & Human Services
http://www.hhs.gov/

Food and Drug Administration
http://www.fda.gov/

Serving Size

This is the **first place to look** when examining a Nutrition Facts label. Serving sizes are standardized for easy comparison with similar foods and are provided in familiar units, such as cups or pieces, followed by the metric amount.

Pay attention to the serving size and number of servings. In the sample label, a serving size is one cup of soup, but the can contains about **2 servings** (19 oz.). If you were to eat the whole can, you would consume **twice the amount** of calories, fat, cholesterol, etc. as the label says.

Calories (and Calories from Fat)

Calories provide a measure of how much **energy** you get from a serving of this food. Many Americans consume **more calories than they need** without meeting recommended intakes for a number of nutrients.

The calorie section of the label can help you **manage your weight** (i.e., gain, lose, or maintain.) Remember: the **number of servings** you consume determines the **number of calories** you actually eat (your portion amount).

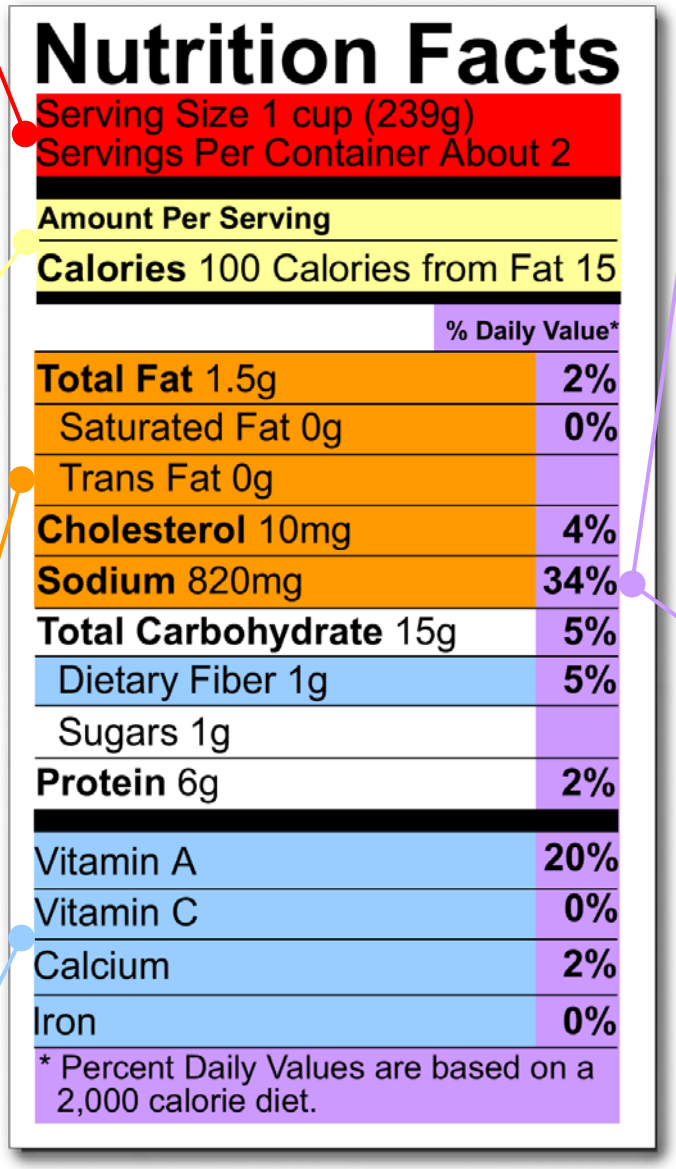
Limit These Nutrients

The nutrients listed first are the ones Americans generally eat in adequate amounts, or even too much. **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.

Get Plenty of These Nutrients

Most Americans don't get enough dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron in their diets. Eating enough of these nutrients can **improve your health** and help **reduce the risk** of some diseases and conditions.

Sample label for
Chicken Rice with Vegetables Soup



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (239g)
Servings Per Container About 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 100 Calories from Fat 15

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 1.5g	**2%**
Saturated Fat 0g	**0%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	**4%**
Sodium 820mg	**34%**
Total Carbohydrate 15g	**5%**
Dietary Fiber 1g	**5%**
Sugars 1g	
Protein 6g	**2%**
Vitamin A	**20%**
Vitamin C	**0%**
Calcium	**2%**
Iron	**0%**

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Question

If you ate the **whole can of soup**, how many calories would you consume? (See back for answer.)

Percent Daily Value (%DV)

Percent daily values tell you **how much** of something, whether it's fat, sugar or vitamin A, **one serving** will give you compared to how much you need for the **entire day**.

Calories:	2,000	2,500	Goal
Total Fat	65g	80g	less than
Saturated Fat	20g	25g	less than
Cholesterol	300mg	300mg	less than
Sodium	2,400mg	2,400mg	less than
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g	at least
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g	at least

%DVs are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. The %DV is based on how much or how little of the key nutrients you should eat whether you eat 2,000 or 2,500 calories a day. So if you eat a 2,000-calorie diet, you should eat less than 65 grams of fat in all the foods you eat for the day.

A general **guideline** for **%Daily Value**: **5%** or less is **low**; **20%** or more is **high**.

Use the %DV for ...

Comparisons: The %DV makes it easy for you to make comparisons. You can compare one product or brand to a similar product. Just **make sure the serving sizes are similar**, especially the **weight** (e.g. gram, milligram, ounces) of each product.

Nutrient Content Claims: Use the %DV to help you quickly distinguish one claim from another, such as "reduced fat" vs. "light" or "nonfat." Just compare the %DVs for **Total Fat** in each food product to see which one is higher or lower in that nutrient. This works when comparing all nutrient content claims, e.g., less, light, low, free, more, high, etc.

Dietary Trade-Offs: You can use the %DV to help you make dietary trade-offs with other foods throughout the day. When a food you like is high in fat, **balance** it with foods that are low in fat at other times of the day.