

How to Read a Nutrition Label

Labels on food contain a number of elements, such as pictures, brand names, the quantity of food in the package, the source of the food, ingredient lists, nutrition claims, and health claims. These elements look quite different from package to package. The Nutrition Facts table, however, contains the same information presented in the same way from package to package. Health Canada has rules about how to present the information on this table and clear definitions of each item on the table so that consumers can compare food products and make healthier choices.

What does the Nutrition Facts table tell you?

1. **The serving size that the nutrition facts are based on.** Check this carefully—it might only be two cookies! If you eat three or four or five cookies, you need to start multiplying the values.

2. **The number of calories of food energy you will get from that one serving.** Use this number to calculate how many calories you consume in a day, and compare it to the number of calories you think you burn in a day. If there's a difference between the two numbers, it will affect your body weight.

3. **% Daily Values.** These numbers are based on the recommended daily intake of each nutrient. This number tells you whether the food contains a large portion of the recommended intake of a certain nutrient, (such as Fibre or Iron, as shown in the example) or only a small portion (see Fat or Cholesterol on the right).

4. **Fat, Cholesterol, and Sodium** (salt) are nutrients that can harm your health if you eat too much of them. Choose foods that show low % Daily Values to make sure you keep within healthy limits.

5. **Carbohydrate, Protein, and Vitamins and Minerals** are nutrients that you need adequate amounts of. Use these numbers to make sure that you are getting enough of these nutrients every day.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1 cup (55 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 220	
Fat 2 g	3 %
Saturated 0 g	0 %
+ Trans 0 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 270 mg	11 %
Carbohydrate 44 g	15 %
Fibre 8 g	32 %
Sugars 16 g	
Protein 6 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 4 %	Iron 40 %

Your body needs all of these nutrients (and more) to stay healthy, but too much or too little can harm your health. Use the Nutrition Facts table on food products to make sure you are giving your body the macromolecules it needs.