How to read a food label

The US Nutrition Facts label, line by line, in the FDA’s words. The fill-in version is at pcostrackerapp.com/tools/read-a-food-label/

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.

Serving size

All the numbers on the label are for one serving. The serving size is the amount people typically eat. It is not a recommendation of how much to eat.

Servings per container

How many servings are in the pack. Eat two servings and you get twice every number, the %DV too.

Calories

How much energy one serving gives. Labels use 2,000 calories a day as a general guide. Your needs may be higher or lower.

Total carbohydrate

The grams of carbohydrate in one serving, with its %DV beside it.

Dietary fiber

Most Americans don’t get enough fiber, the FDA says. The Daily Value is 28 g a day, so the % shows how much of that one serving gives.

Total sugars

Sugars that are naturally in the food, like those in milk and fruit, plus any added sugars. There is no %DV, because no daily amount has been set.

Added sugars

Sugars added while the food is made, and sugars from syrups, honey and concentrated juice. “Includes” means they are already counted in total sugars. The Daily Value is 50 g.

Protein

The grams of protein in one serving. A %DV is only required if the pack makes a protein claim or the food is for children under 4.

% Daily Value

How much of a day’s reference amount one serving gives. The FDA’s general guide: 5% or less is low, 20% or more is high.

The label is the FDA’s sample. Words from the FDA: FDA: How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label (content current as of 5 March 2024), https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label. This guide explains the label. It does not score foods or set targets.