

# Creating Health & Nutrition Fact Sheets

## Nutrition Information

The Nutrition Facts panel found on food packages can help you make better food choices. Use it to:

- Find foods with more of certain nutrients
- Find foods with less of certain nutrients
- Compare the nutritional value of similar foods

The first item to look at on the Nutrition Facts panel is the serving size. It shows the amount of food in one serving and the number of servings in the package. The Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture have standardized serving sizes to make comparing similar foods easier. Amounts are given in familiar units, such as cups or pieces, followed by the metric amount.

**Tip**  
Use the Nutrition Facts panel to limit problem nutrients and increase nutrients you want to eat more of.

## The Nutrition Facts Panel

The size of the serving determines the number of calories and the amount of nutrients you get from the food. Pay attention to the serving size and the number of servings you eat (your portion size). This is especially important for containers that you usually eat in one sitting, like a bag of potato chips. If you eat the entire package, and the serving size is half the package, you need to double the calories and nutrients from the food.

The next part of the panel shows the number of calories in one serving of the food, followed by the number of calories that come specifically from fat. Be sure to take note of the calories even if the food is labeled as fat free, reduced fat,

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and so forth. This doesn't mean that the food is calorie free. A lower-fat version of a food may have as many calories as the full-fat version.

Listed below calories are total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium. The number following each nutrient gives the amount in grams (g) or milligrams (mg). Most Americans eat enough or too much of these nutrients. Eaten in excess, they may increase the risk of developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and some cancers. Keeping within recommended levels may reduce risk of disease or improve health if disease already exists.

Potassium, total carbohydrates, dietary fiber, sugars, and protein follow next on the panel. Adequate dietary fiber and potassium in the diet promote good health. Information on total carbohydrate, sugars, and protein can help consumers make healthier choices between similar foods.

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Vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron are next on the panel. These are nutrients that promote good health, but some Americans don't get enough. Consumers can use information from the panel to compare food products and get the most nutrients for the calories.

Use the Percent Daily Value (%DV) to make comparisons and increase or limit nutrients in your diet. The %DV is listed on the right side of the panel; it shows the percent of your day's need for a nutrient that you get from one serving of the food. For instance, the Nutrition Facts panel on page 1 shows that one serving of the food gives 18 percent of the recommended amount of total fat to eat for the day.

When the Percent Daily Value is 20% or higher, the food is a good source of the nutrient. Look for higher percent daily values for potassium, fiber, calcium, vitamins A and C, calcium, and iron. Look for percent daily values less than 5%, which is considered low, for these nutrients: total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium.

%DVs are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. Your DV may be higher or lower depending on your calorie and

## Examine Your Choices

Food	Source	What I do	What I plan to buy/change
<i>Example:</i> Eat less sodium	Processed foods	Eat whatever I want	Check the %DV for sodium to buy foods with 5 percent or less sodium per serving

## My Goal:

Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) needs. Most women over age 50 need 1,600 to 1,800 calories, so your %DV would need to be multiplied by 0.8 for each nutrient. However, women in this age-group need a higher amount of calcium, so their calcium %DV should be multiplied by 1.3.

There is no %DV for trans fat, sugar, and protein. Consume as little trans fat as possible because it increases risk of heart disease. While there is no recommended amount for sugar, a large amount in the diet usually means extra calories and fewer of the nutrients that promote good health. Use the number of sugar grams to compare similar foods. When choosing

a food for its protein content, such as meat, poultry, dry beans, milk, and milk products, make choices that are lean, low fat, or fat free.

The panel's bottom part is a recommendation on how much to eat for some specific nutrients. It gives amounts for 2,000- and 2,500-calorie diets. If your calorie needs are different, you may need to make adjustments for total fat, saturated fat, and total carbohydrates. Cholesterol, sodium, and dietary fiber will remain the same.

For more information on food labeling, go to [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/lab-gen.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/lab-gen.html).

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