

# "Get Your Plate in Shape"

## Week 4: Food Labels & Smart Food Shopping

### How do food labels help?

(Turn to page 3 of *Activity & Eating*)

Sample label for Macaroni & Cheese

**Nutrition Facts**  
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)  
Servings Per Container 2

1 **Start Here** →

2 **Check Calories** **Calories** 250 **Calories from Fat** 110

3 **Limit these Nutrients**

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%

6 **Quick Guide to % DV**

\* 5% or less is Low  
\* 20% or more is High

4 **Get Enough of these Nutrients**

Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

5 **Footnote**

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

	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

### Let's talk about several of the food label stats and the importance to your health:

**Total fat** shows how much fat is in a single serving of a given food and is usually measured in grams. Fats are an important source of energy and provide insulation for the skin, bones, and internal organs. Fat also distributes and helps the body store certain vitamins.

- **Unsaturated fats** (are a mix of **monounsaturated fatty acids** and **polyunsaturated fatty acids**), and are found in vegetable oils, nuts, and fish. They are liquid at room temperature.
- **Saturated fats** come from animal products like cheese, meats, and some plant foods like coconut. They are solid at room temperature.
- **Trans-fats** can be naturally found in some animal foods. However, some trans-fat are created as a result of hydrogenating vegetable oils to make them solid at room temperature, such as shortening. Consumption of this type of fat should be kept to a minimum.

#### **What's the takeaway on fats?**

Balance your consumption of saturated fat with unsaturated fats. Eat nutrient-rich foods that are natural sources of fats such as avocado, cheese, salmon, almonds and lean meats. Reduce your intake of foods high in fats that don't provide important nutrients like cakes, cookies and chips.

**Cholesterol** is important for the production of vitamin D, certain hormones and for building other important substances in the body. Although our bodies can make a certain amount of cholesterol, we also need to get some of it through the foods we eat. Blood cholesterol comes in two major types: HDL (the "good" kind) and LDL (the "bad" kind). Too much LDL cholesterol in a person's blood increases the risk of heart disease. Eating a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, low-fat milk products, whole grains and lean meats, seafood, nuts and beans can help you lower your risk for heart disease.

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**Sodium** is a component of salt. Processed, packaged, and canned foods usually have more sodium than freshly made foods. Small amounts of sodium keep proper fluid balance. Sodium also helps the body transmit electrical signals through nerves. Too much sodium can increase water retention and blood pressure in people who are sensitive to it.

What are the typical sources of sodium in our diet? Five percent is added during cooking, six percent is added at the table, 12 percent occurs naturally in foods, and 77 percent comes from processed foods. In order to keep sodium intake within recommend levels, consume a variety of nutrient-rich foods, with a focus on whole, natural and minimally processed. Since meals eaten out are often higher in sodium, try eating more meals at home.

**Total Carbohydrate** This amount covers all carbohydrates, including fiber and sugar. The best sources of carbohydrates come from fruits and vegetables, whole-grains, legumes and milk. Sugars are listed separately under Total Carbohydrates. Checking sugar quantities on labels can be really eye opening. Often there's more than you'd expect. Try to reduce the amount of high sugar foods that don't provide any nutrients such as soft drinks, fruit punch, cookies and candy.

**Fiber** helps keep your digestive system healthy. Fiber can also help reduce cholesterol levels. Best of all, fiber has no calories and it can help you feel full. So check labels and pick several foods each day that have at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.

**Protein** Most of the body — including muscles, skin, and the immune system — is made up of protein.

Research shows that muscle synthesis is greatly enhanced by moderate protein intakes of 25 grams (about 4 ounces of meat) or more per meal. Muscle loss is caused from inactivity and aging. Older adults lose muscle three times faster than younger individuals when they are inactive. So it's especially important to eat enough high-quality protein foods as we age.

**Vitamins and Minerals** choose foods that are high in a variety of vitamins and minerals. The FDA requires food manufacturers to include information about vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron. Sometimes you'll see other important vitamins and minerals listed on the label, especially if the product contains significant amounts.

Food labels can't tell you what foods to eat — that's your decision! But they can help you find foods that taste good and treat your body right.

Nutrition Facts: An interactive guide to food labels: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/nutrition-facts/NU00293>



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## Week 4: Food Labels & Smart Food Shopping

### Smart Food Shopping

Let's talk about the fundamentals:

- ➔ Choose a variety of nutrient-rich foods from all five food groups like milk and milk products, vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean meats, nuts and beans.
- ➔ Consider portion sizes when making your food choices. It's easy to over consume calories when our portions are too large. For examples of common serving sizes, check out page 4 of the Activity & Eating booklet.
- ➔ Enjoy those less-than-perfect foods in moderation. Remember, you don't have to eliminate your favorite indulgences, just choose them less often.

Let's take a virtual tour of a typical store and find some tips for shopping wisely.

#### In the Produce Aisle

- Color counts - bring home an entire rainbow of colorful fruits and vegetables. Those colors are a nice visual representation of some of the antioxidants available in your produce.
- You can save time by purchasing refrigerated jars of grapefruit, tropical salad, pears and other fruit. Or select pre-cut fruit like pineapple, melons, freshly cut vegetables like celery, baby carrots and bagged salads.
- Buy small. Smaller sized fruits are often sweeter and more tender than larger, more mature pieces.
- Choose dark green salad items like romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce, spinach, curly endive or radicchio.

#### In the Cereal, Bread, Crackers, Tortillas, Pasta, Rice & Beans Aisle(s)

- Look for the word "whole" as the first ingredient on the ingredient list.
- Read Nutrition Facts labels to find cereals that contain at least 3 grams of fiber per serving. Check front labels for claims such as "whole grain" or "rich in whole grain."
- Don't count on terms like "multigrain," "12-" and "cracked wheat" - they can be deceiving. They're mostly refined flour with a touch of whole-grain flour.
- Regular or quick-cooking brown rice makes a delicious side dish.
- Whole-wheat pasta has a nutty texture. Try to substitute it for plain every other time or make your pasta half and half.
- Barley can be used in soups, stews and also works in hearty salads, pilafs and casseroles. It's considered a whole grain.

#### Oils, Fats & Condiments

- Olive, canola, and peanut oils contain healthful monounsaturated fats.
- Small amounts of flavored oils, like sesame and garlic, can provide intense flavor to your favorite recipes.
- Mayonnaise now comes in regular, light (1/2 the fat), low fat (94% fat free) and fat free versions.
- Choose a variety of vinegars & mustards for extra flavor with fewer calories.

#### Dairy Case

- Choose from a wide variety of milk options to meet your individual needs; whole (3.5%), reduced-fat (2%), low-fat (1%), nonfat and lactose-free milk. They all contain the same nine essential nutrients you need including calcium, vitamin D, potassium and protein.
- Yogurt is usually available in low-fat and nonfat varieties. Look for brands containing active cultures or probiotics, which can lead to a healthy digestive system.
- Cottage cheese is available in 2%, 1% and even nonfat varieties. Both cottage cheese and ricotta cheese are also great to use in many recipes from lasagna to pancakes.
- Butter – Used in moderation, butter can add a depth of flavor to many recipes and foods, plus it's essential when baking!

#### Meat & Seafood

- Choose lean meats and skinless poultry. Or try removing the skin on poultry before cooking, as this drastically cuts down on the fat.
- Ideally prepare fish twice a week. Select a variety.
- Enjoy beef and pork several times a month. Look for lean cuts of meat.
- Request or cut into 4 ounces of raw meat to equal 3 ounces cooked.