

Nutrition facts labels contain important information to help you make good food choices, but they can be difficult to understand. So grab a packaged food product, find the label and let's get a few things straight!

Start With Serving Size

The information in the nutrition facts label is based on the serving size. Compare the serving size to the amount of food you actually eat. For example, the serving size of bread could be 1 slice, but if you eat 2 slices, you need to double the amount of calories and nutrients you are consuming.

Know The Nutrients

The left hand side of the label shows the nutrients in the food (ie: fat, cholesterol, sodium, protein, carbohydrates, etc.) Choose food that has more of the nutrients you want and less of the nutrients that you don't want. As a general rule of thumb, you want more fibre, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron. You will want less saturated fat, trans fat and sodium.



Know The Nutrition Facts

By: Melissa White,
Pharmacist

Use % Daily Value (DV)

Across from the nutrient is the % daily value. This tells you if the serving size (ie: 1 slice) has a little or a lot of a nutrient (ie: sodium). Again, as a general rule, 5% daily value or less is a little, and 15% daily value or more is a lot.

Read The Claims

A nutrient content claim such as "source of fibre," can help you choose foods that contain a nutrient you may want more of in your diet. They can also help

you choose foods that contain less amount of a nutrient, such as "reduced sodium." These health claims can help you include foods in your diet that help reduce risk of chronic diseases. For example, a claim could read: "A healthy diet rich in a variety of vegetables and fruit may help reduce the risk of some types of cancer." Remember, health claims are *optional*, so it is still important to refer to the nutrition facts label in order to make the best food choices.

Double Check Ingredients

Ingredients are also listed on nutrition labels in order of weight, beginning with what weighs the most (and contains the most) and ending with the ingredient that weighs the least (and contains the least). You can use this to check if a product has a certain ingredient. You can also avoid products with ingredients that cause a food allergy or intolerance.

Making informed food choices is easier if you know the facts! For more information on the nutrition facts labels, visit: www.canada.ca/en/services/health/food-labels.html

Your pharmacist is your most accessible health care provider. If you have questions, feel free to ask.

ASK THE EXPERT:

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