

How to Read a Nutritional Label and Eat Smart.

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 6 oz			
Servings Per Container 25			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories	690	Calories from Fat	76
% Daily Value *			
Total Fat	8g		13%
Saturated Fat	3g		15%
Cholesterol	126mg		42%
Sodium	408mg		17%
Total Carbohydrate	109g		36%
Dietary Fiber	3g		11%
Sugars	27g		
Protein	43g		
Vitamin A	2%	*	Vitamin C 3%
Calcium	3%	*	Iron 10%
* 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
Calories per gram:			
Fat	9	* Carbohydrate	4 * Protein 4

All Federal regulations and laws are part of a vast library / data bases entitled the “Code of Federal Regulations” or CFR for short. The part that relates to Food labeling laws, guidelines, and standards is “Title 21”. At the end of this handout, is the web URL link to Title 21, for those of you who really want to dig into this law. The entire “Title” is searchable on-line.

Keys to understanding and using the % Daily Values, help you reach your dietary and healthy eating goals:

Serving Size

In the example above, the serving size is 6 oz. These sizes are uniform amongst like items. For example all potato chips have the same serving size; 1 oz.

Calories and Calories from Fat

This 6 oz. serving is 690 cal. With 76 cal. derived from fat. For almost all healthy eating goals, these are two very important values. **Less is better.** To put this in perspective it would take about 1.5 to 2 hours of swimming to burn off 690 calories. Americans in general consume far more calories than the body requires.

% Daily Values

This is the percentage of the total daily consumption, that this serving size contributes. So in the example above, this 6 oz. serving is 15% of saturated fat allowed. (In this 2000 calorie per day diet)

Nutrients

In the next section, starting with “Total Fat” and going thru “Sodium”, these all are better for you if consumed in the lower range of “Daily Values”, there is perhaps one exception:

Some think that foods containing **monounsaturated fats** lower the LDL, (the bad cholesterol), prime examples of **monounsaturated fats** are: olive oil and canola oil. Olive oil being higher in monounsaturated fat, than canola. This is thought in many circles to be a part of the “Mediterranean Diet” and its positive effect on health. Other foods thought to contribute to this diet are olive oil,

fish, including sardines and anchovies, nuts, fresh vegetables, and low to moderate amounts of red wine. These are in part components of typical diets of the people residing along the Mediterranean Sea.

In the balance of the Nutrient section, “**Dietary Fiber**” is one of the most important and often overlooked. Many studies have indicated that increased dietary fiber reduces, blood fats, cholesterol and guards against stroke and heart attack.

A novel position has been adopted by the [US Department of Agriculture](#) to include *functional fibers* as isolated fiber sources that may be included in the diet.^[1] The term "fiber" is somewhat of a [misnomer](#), since many types of so-called dietary fiber are not [fibers](#) at all.

“Food sources of dietary fiber are often divided according to whether they provide (predominantly) soluble or insoluble fiber. Plant foods contain both types of fiber in varying degrees according to the plant’s characteristics.”

“Advantages of consuming fiber are the production of salubrious compounds during the fermentation of soluble fiber, and insoluble fiber's ability (via its passive hydrophilic properties) to increase bulk, soften stool and shorten transit time through the [intestinal tract](#)”. Thus less time for “bad” ingredients to be absorbed into the blood stream.

Dietary fiber is found in plants. While all plants contain some fiber, plants with high fiber concentrations are generally the most practical source.

The only warning here is to start out slowly...again; **slowly** in introducing fiber to your diet. Too much, too quick will most often produce cramping, gas, diarrhea. Once your digestive system has gained a balance, the problems should go away.

Vitamins

The final nutrient section, vitamins should be consumed as close to the daily value as possible. Note; not all vitamins and minerals are required to be listed. You can use the web sites listed to determine other vitamins you are consuming in your daily routine, if you so desire.

Ingredients

The Ingredient list, which is suppose to be next to the “**Nutrition Facts**”, lists the ingredients in the order of amount. The first listed is the largest component of that food item. Read these along with your 2 or 3 chosen nutritional daily values and you are well on your way to being a more informed consumer!

RECAP

As you can see this little informational box on all foods, is quite a bit of data. One could not evaluate every single variable. You would spend all your time in the grocery isle reading labels and perhaps drive yourself crazy. Pick out the **2** or **3** most important nutritional daily values, **as they relate to your condition or goal.**

For example, if Dr. Wu has told you that your LDL's (Low-density lipoprotein) are too high, then you would probably concentrate on cholesterol levels and saturated fat levels. If you have elevated blood pressure, of course keep your eye on Sodium and Calories. If weight loss is your goal, then watch the calories, fats, especially saturated fats. Dr. Wu and Teresa Chen can address this far better than a layperson such as I.

Pay attention to is the serving size, these can be quite an eye opener. Look at the “Servings Per Container” You may or may not

consume what the USDA says is a serving size. If that bag of chips says “3 Servings per Container” and you eat the whole bag for lunch, you will need to multiple, for example, the sodium “% Daily Value” by 3. Ouch.

Also learn to ignore, the advertising on the product containers. Seductive banners of “LOW FAT”, “LESS SODIUM THAN REGULAR” etc. etc. They are trying to sell you something. Read your selected daily value %’s.

Finally, the FDA/USDA allows a 20% margin of error. So the declared daily values may not be exact. You are better off being consistent; an occasional slip up is OK and might be a deserved reward. Unless you have a very specific dietary condition, such as diabetes, all things in **moderation** are proper for you.

Lastly my disclaimer: the comments included here in are the authors alone. I am not a medical health care provider. If you would like further information about food labels, feel free to contact me, Art. Our email address is: ambray@pacbell.net

Sources:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition/ConsumerInformation/ucm078889.htm>

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/index.html>

<http://www.nutritiondata.com/>

CFR - Code of Federal Regulations Title 21

<http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?CFRPart=101>