

INGREDIENTS

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A BEGINNERS GUIDE
TO FOOD LABELS

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INTRO

As I started down the path to becoming a Nutritional Therapy Practitioner and began to talk to people about their food, one thought began to overwhelm all others.

“If only people knew what they were eating”

What they were ACTUALLY allowing to go inside of their bodies. Just because it's sold at the grocery store doesn't mean it's good for you. Unfortunately, you'll find many 'foods' at even the natural or health food store that are detrimental to your health. How do you begin to understand which foods are serving your health or not?

That's where this guide comes in.

In this guide you'll discover:

- **How to read a Nutrition Facts Label**
- **How to read an Ingredients Label**
- **Which ingredients you should avoid**
- **How to begin sourcing food that serves your health**

This guide is just meant as a basic introduction, there is much more information you can dig into if you find it interesting. But this guide should get you started reading and deciphering food labels so you can making good decisions for yourself and your family.



HOW TO READ A NUTRITION FACTS LABEL

Let's start at the very beginning. How do we know what's in our food? We normally look on the back of it's

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g) Servings Per Container About 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 230	Calories from Fat 40
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	12%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A	10%
Vitamin C	8%
Calcium	20%
Iron	45%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value 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

SERVING SIZE:

At the very top, you'll see the serving size. This will tell you what measurement of this product is considered one serving, and how many servings are included in the product.

CALORIES:

States the amount of calories per serving.

CALORIES FROM FAT:

States the amount of calories in a serving that are from fat.

DAILY VALUE %:

This shows the daily percent one serving of this product takes up based on a 2,000 calorie a day diet. So this number is going to be different for everybody.

TOTAL FAT:

An important macronutrient. Shows the amount of fat in grams per serving. You will often hear to avoid fat for your health, but it's not as simple as that. Our bodies need fat to thrive. Later on, we will talk about the need for quality and balance of fat in the diet.

CHOLESTEROL:

Shows the amount of cholesterol in g or mg per serving.

SODIUM:

Shows the amount of sodium in mg or g per serving.

TOTAL CARBOHYDRATES:

An important macronutrient. Shows the amount of carbohydrates in g per serving.

PROTEIN:

An important macronutrient. Shows the amount of protein in g per serving.

VITAMINS + MINERALS:

Shows the amount of select micronutrients per serving.

PERCENT DAILY VALUE:

Next to each nutrient you will see a percent. This number represents how much of a particular nutrient contributes to your total daily diet if you consume 2,000 calories per day. If more or less than 2,000 calories are consumed this number will change. But it's a good start. The science regarding recommended daily values is hard to measure and is always changing, so don't live by these numbers. We all are bio individual, and have different needs. More on this later.

packaging at a box called "Nutrition Facts Table." At first glance, this can look intimidating or boring. But let's break it down a little.

NUTRIENTS EXPLAINED

What are nutrients? Nutrients are chemical substances contained in food necessary for sustaining life. They provide energy, contribute to the bodies structure and regulate body processes.

There are **MACRONUTRIENTS** and **MICRONUTRIENTS**. Both are represented on the nutrition labels.

MACRONUTRIENTS

The three macronutrients are Fat, Protein and Carbohydrates. We can agree that all are necessary for health, but where you will hear arguments is in regards to the ratio of these in the diet. Some tout that a low carb, high fat diet- such as Keto- is the 'perfect' diet, whereas others will swear that a high carb diet is the 'perfect' diet.

But what I want to stress to all of you is that there is no one perfect diet! Each one of us is a bio individual, meaning our bodies all have their own unique composition and needs. So this ratio between macros is going to be unique for each one of us, and will require some self-experimentation.

A good starting point is to aim for what we like to call the 40/30/30. Meaning 40% carbohydrates, 30% fat and 30% protein.

But let's discuss each of these macros and their roles within the body so you can determine what is right for you, and what the information on these packages means.





FAT

FAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU FAT! AND NOT ALL FATS ARE CREATED EQUAL!

Fat has gotten a lot of flak in the past, being blamed for obesity and heart disease, but recent studies have busted these myths. Fat is an essential macronutrient. It is required for every single one of your cells to function and communicate within the body. Fat also provides a steady source of energy. You're probably familiar with the feeling of being hungry an hour or so after your lunch? This is probably because you aren't eating enough fats to keep you satiated! Fats also slow the absorption of your food, helping with feeling full and slowing down sugar metabolism. This lowers the burden on your pancreas as it won't have to pump out as much insulin to keep your blood sugar levels optimum.

There are different types of fats:

POLYUNSATURATED FATS:

Includes Omega 3 and Omega 6 Fatty acids. Some sources include cod liver oil, chia seeds, flaxseeds, tuna, blackcurrant seed oils. Pumpkin and sunflower seeds. These fats are very unstable and should never be used for cooking.

MONOUNSATURATED FATS:

Includes Omega 9 Fatty acids. Sources include olive oil, avocado oil and almond oil. These fats are slightly more stable, but still oxidative at high heats. They are best eaten at room temperature.

SATURATED FATS:

These include fats from animals, such as tallow, lard, butter, duck fat etc and tropical fats such as coconut oil and palm oil. These fats are the most stable and are the safest for cooking.

When looking at the Nutrition Facts, when you see that there is fat in the product, always look to the ingredients information to see what kind of fats are included.

There is a type of fat that you will see on ingredients labels frequently, this oil is called Hydrogenated Oil or Partially Hydrogenated oil.

So which oils are good for me? All the other fats listed are good for you and necessary to health. Eat a variety of organic, cold pressed oils in your diet. Aiming for around 30% of fat in your diet is a good starting point.





PROTEIN

Another essential macronutrient is protein. Protein, as you may know, is responsible for forming healthy muscles and tissues. They break down in the body into amino acids which have many important roles, such as neurotransmitter and hormone production, DNA regulation and producing and regulating enzymes.

You'll find protein in animal meats, fish meats, eggs, dairy products and nuts. You want to get pasture raised, grass-fed, organic protein sources whenever you are able as they are more sustainable to the environment and more nutrient dense.

When you see protein on the food label you will want to check and see what protein source it comes from. Aiming for around 30% of protein in your diet is a good starting point.

CARBOHYDRATE

Carbohydrates have been getting a bad rep these days as the old research that fats caused health issues is being debunked and 'proving' that carbohydrates are the new bad guys. But again, it's not that carbohydrates are bad guys. Some carbohydrates are essential for health.

Carbohydrates are the brains preferred energy source. They also provide quick energy for muscles, and provide fiber in the diet which helps with regular elimination.

Under Carbohydrates you will also see dietary fiber and sugar included. It is worth mentioning that all carbs breaks down into sugar in the stomach, but this number also reflects added sugars and flavorings as well. Sugars can go by many different names. See a later section.

So which carbohydrates are the bad guys? REFINED CARBOHYDRATES are the ones you want to look out for and avoid. These include anything man made or processed such as sugar, flours, pastas, chips, cereals, cookies, crackers, prepackaged meals, doughnuts, sodas, fruit juices, candy etc. Basically, packaged forms of carbohydrates have been stripped of healthful vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutrients and made into a shelf stable ' Frankenfood.' These foods are unhealthful and high in calories.

A diet high in refined carbohydrates will lead to blood sugar dysregulation, and eventually diabetes.

Which carbohydrates should you be eating then? Fresh fruits and vegetables should be the majority of your carbohydrate consumption. Properly soaked and sprouted grains such as rice, lentils, and oats on occasion can also be healthful when combined with a healthy fat to slow down sugar metabolism.

Aim for about 40% carbohydrate in your diet to start.

MICRONUTRIENTS

Micronutrients are nutrients essential to our health and function in small amounts. These include vitamins and minerals. These are included underneath the macronutrients on the nutrition label and they will be listed out individually.

VITAMINS

Vitamins are essential to our health. They act as coenzymes in metabolic processes, support tissue growth and prevent deficiency related disorders.

MINERALS

Minerals are another micronutrient essential to our health. In the body they regulate blood serum pH, facilitate the transfer of nutrients across the cell membrane, maintain proper nerve conduction, and contract and relax muscles.

Now that we have an idea of what these nutrients on Nutrition Fact Labels means, let's look at how to read the ingredients Label.



HOW TO READ AN INGREDIENTS LABEL

TO GET THE BEST IDEA OF HOW HEALTHFUL A PACKAGED FOOD IS, YOU MUST READ THE INGREDIENTS LABEL.

INGREDIENTS LABELS ARE OFTEN LISTED JUST UNDERNEATH THE NUTRITION FACTS LABEL ON THE BACK OF A PACKAGE.

INGREDIENTS MUST BE LISTED IN THE ORDER OF QUANTITY. SO THE INGREDIENT FIRST IS THE MOST PREVALENT INGREDIENT, FOLLOWED BY THE SECOND MOST COMMON INGREDIENT AND SO ON.

INGREDIENTS: WHOLE GRAIN OATS, SOY PROTEIN CONCENTRATE, HONEY, EXPELLER PRESSED CANOLA OIL, SOY PROTEIN, ALMONDS, ROASTED SOYBEANS, NATURAL FLAVOUR, CRISP RICE (RICE, BARLEY MALT), SOY LECITHIN.

CONTAINS OAT, SOY, ALMOND AND BARLEY INGREDIENTS. MAY CONTAIN PEANUTS AND OTHER TREE NUTS.

INGRÉDIENTS : AVOINE ENTIÈRE, CONCENTRÉ DE PROTÉINES DE SOYA, MIEL, HUILE DE CANOLA EXTRAITE PAR PRESSION, PROTÉINES DE SOYA, AMANDES, FÈVES DE SOYA RÔTIÉS, ARÔME NATUREL, RIZ CROUSTILLANT (RIZ, ORGE MALTÉE), LÉCITHINE DE SOYA.

CONTIENT DES INGRÉDIENTS DE L'AVOINE, DU SOYA, DE L'AMANDE ET DE L'ORGE. PEUT CONTENIR DES ARACHIDES ET D'AUTRES NOIX.

Imported by / Importé par Kellogg Canada Inc.
Mississauga, Ontario L4W 5S1

INGREDIENTS TO QUESTION



With that in mind, you would think it would be easy to decipher what was in your food right?!

Think again.

In an effort to confuse and overwhelm the consumer, many food companies will use confusing and complex alternative names for ingredients known to be unhealthy, such as sugar. This is where your responsibility as a consumer kicks in, and you need to know your facts. Here are some common names for several unhealthy ingredients.

SUGAR

Sugar/Sucrose, table sugar, High-Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS), Agave nectar, agave syrup, Beet sugar, Blackstrap molasses, Brown sugar, Buttered syrup, Cane juice crystals, Cane sugar, Caramel, Carob syrup, Castor sugar, Coconut sugar, Confectioner's sugar, Powdered sugar, Date sugar, Demerara sugar, Evaporated cane juice, Florida crystals, Fruit juice, Fruit juice concentrate, Golden sugar, Golden syrup, Grape sugar, Honey, Icing sugar, Invert sugar, Maple syrup, Molasses, Muscovado sugar, Panela sugar, Raw sugar, Refiner's syrup, Sorghum syrup, Sucanat, Treacle sugar, Turbinado sugar, Yellow sugar, Barley malt, Brown rice syrup,

Corn syrup, Corn syrup solids, Dextrin, Dextrose, Diastatic malt, Ethyl maltol, Glucose, Glucose solids, Lactose, Malt syrup, Maltodextrin, Maltose,

Rice syrup, Crystalline fructose, Fructose, D-ribose, Galactose (1)

SODIUM

Disodium guanylate (GMP), Disodium inosinate (IMP), Fleur de sel, Himalayan pink salt, Kosher salt, Monosodium glutamate (MSG), Rock salt, Salt, Sea salt, Sodium bicarbonate, Sodium nitrate, Sodium citrate, Sodium chloride, Sodium diacetate, Sodium erythorbate, Sodium glutamate, Sodium lactate, Sodium lauryl Sulfate, Sodium metabisulfite, Sodium phosphate, Trisodium phosphate (2)

TRANS FATS

While Trans Fats has a slot on the Nutrition Information, there is a loophole in the current labeling laws. If a serving size has less than .5 grams of trans fats per serving, it can be rounded down to 0 on the label. This can be one of the reasons you will see absurdly small serving sizes on packages of food, and is something to look out for.

So how do you know if a food has trans fats in it? These ingredients are dead giveaways. Hydrogenated Oils, Partially Hydrogenated Oils, Margarine, Shortening.



INGREDIENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

Anything that you cannot pronounce or picture is a good indication that you shouldn't consume it. If it is artificial, then you shouldn't consume it. These are rules I live by and strongly urge you to do the same. Here are some common ingredients to look out for.

ARTIFICIAL FLAVORING:

According to the FDA “means any substance, the function of which is to impart flavor, which is not derived from a spice, fruit or fruit juice, vegetable or vegetable juice, edible yeast, herb, bark, bud, root, leaf or similar plant material, meat, fish, poultry, eggs, dairy products, or fermentation products thereof.” (3)

These ingredients are taken from a list of synthetic substances deemed 'safe' by the FDA. They are food products created in a lab. They are not real food.

NATURAL FLAVOR:

According to the FDA “The term natural flavor or natural flavoring means the essential oil, oleoresin, essence or extractive, protein hydrolysate, distillate, or any product of roasting, heating or enzymolysis, which contains the flavoring constituents derived

from a spice, fruit or fruit juice, vegetable or vegetable juice, edible yeast, herb, bark, bud, root, leaf or similar plant material, meat, seafood, poultry, eggs, dairy products, or fermentation products thereof, whose significant function in food is flavoring rather than nutritional.” (3)

Don't let the word 'natural' fool you, this ingredient can be literally anything. Natural flavoring can be from anything the company has deemed as 'food.' Naturally, anyone with allergies of any kind should be weary. But the vague nature of this ingredient should be taken with caution by anyone trying to make healthy choices. How were these flavors extracted? Were chemicals used to do so?

SPICE

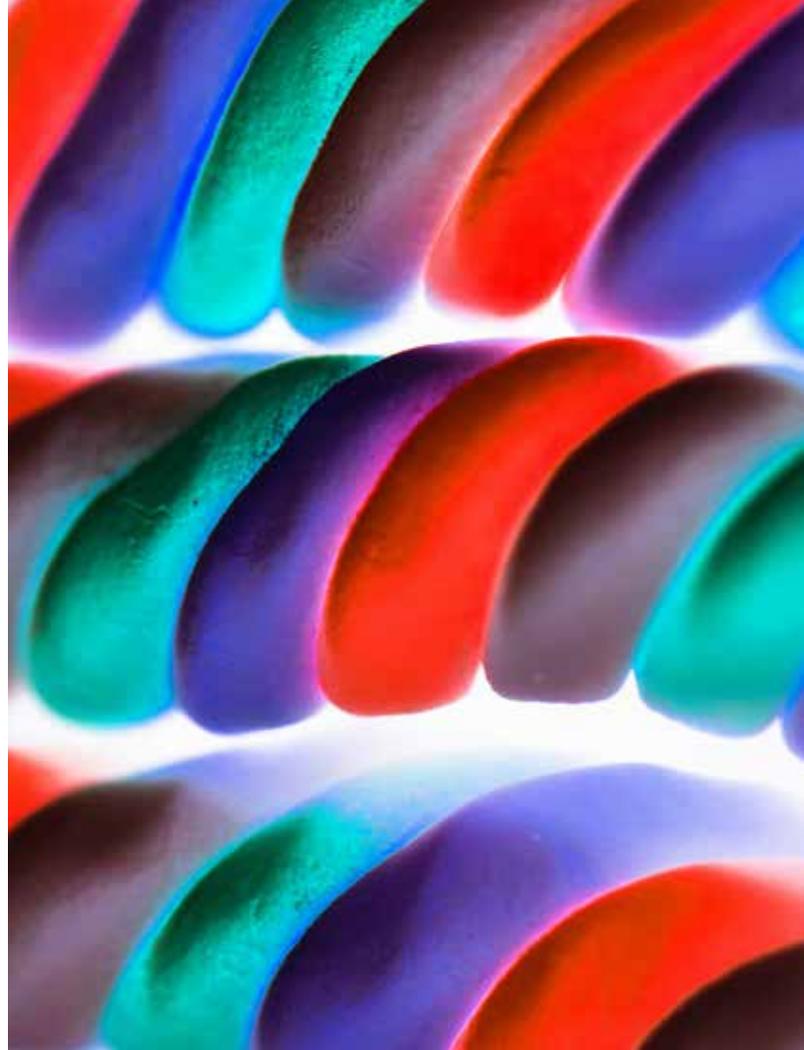
According to the FDA: “The term spice means any aromatic vegetable substance in the whole, broken, or ground form, except for those substances which have been traditionally regarded as foods, such as onions, garlic and celery; whose significant function in food is seasoning rather than nutritional; that is true to name; and from which no portion of any volatile oil or other flavoring principle has been removed.” (3)

These include such things as sage, parsley and turmeric. The primary concern here is for those with allergies.

ARTIFICIAL COLOR

“A color additive is any material, not exempted under section 201(t) of the act, that is a dye, pigment, or other substance made by a process of synthesis or similar artifice, or extracted, isolated, or otherwise derived, with or without intermediate or final change of identity, from a vegetable, animal, mineral, or other source and that, when added or applied to a food, drug, or cosmetic or to the human body or any part thereof, is capable (alone or through reaction with another substance) of imparting a color thereto.” (3)

As you can read in the Code of Federal Regulations (4), this includes ingredients fed to animals to impart colors to their meat, milk, or eggs. These are artificially, lab created ingredients added to foods to give them a more appealing color. So not only are these chemicals doing who knows what to your body, but what are they trying to hide with these colorings? Not only that but food coloring and dyes have been controversial in their safety for years now. Some studies have linked food color consumption and hyperactivity in children. (5) Erythrosine, also known as Red 3, is one of the most controversial dyes and has been known to increase the risk of thyroid tumors in rats. (6)



HYDROGENATED OR PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED OILS

These are vegetable oils (polyunsaturated fats) that undergo many chemical and physical processes to make them shelf stable saturated fats. This is a fat that should be avoided like the plague. These fats will make you fat, and come with a myriad of health concerns. The process creates TRANS FATS. Trans fats are the kinds of fats that will increase blood cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, and create the perfect situation for atherosclerosis. Unfortunately, because of its man made shelf stability and the cheaper cost of these oils, they run rampant in many restaurants and packaged goods. This is one of the many reasons to be an avid Nutrition Label reader and to question what oils are in the foods you are eating.

HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP

This highly processed ingredient is made from (usually genetically modified) corn, but don't think that means it is at all natural or good for you. This ingredient is high in calories and has been linked to increases in obesity, diabetes, elevated blood levels of uric acid, suspected to cause hypertension, metabolic syndrome and chronic disease. (7)





ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS

These include Aspartame (Nutrasweet, Equal), Saccharin (Sweet'N Low, SugarTwin), Acesulfame-K, and Sucralose (Splenda). These should be avoided at all costs. These substances have been known to increase cravings for sweets and fatty foods and make you feel bloated and fat. (8) These sweeteners will be found in many foods touting to be healthy alternatives, such as diet soda. But regular consumption of these drinks has been known to be associated with metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes. (9) These sweeteners are known to be chemically addictive, when given a choice between cocaine or saccharin, rats often chose the latter. (10)

SODIUM NITRATES AND SODIUM NITRITES

These are preservatives often found in deli meats and processed meats. Processed meats have been found to be carcinogenic to humans. (11) Stick with whole roasted meats or wild caught tuna for your sandwiches.

BUTYLATED HYDROXYANISOLE (BHA) AND BUTYLATED HYDROXYTOLUENE (BHT)

A preservative to keep food from spoiling that is in thousands of food products and cosmetics. The FDA considers it GRAS- generally recognized as safe- but some suggest BHA is a possible carcinogen. (12) It can also disrupt hormones (13) and has been known to promote tumor growth. (14)

There are many more foods to look out for, and maybe I will one day write about all of them. But this list should give you a start.

Be critical in your label reading. If you don't know what it is, do your own research and decide for yourself if you think it is serving your health.



CERTIFICATION SEALS YOU CAN TRUST



CERTIFIED GF

A food with this logo will be certified gluten free. Celiacs and those with non celiacs gluten sensitivity should look out for this on their food packaging. This certification is by The Gluten-Free Certification Organization. LINK <http://www.gfco.org/>



USDA ORGANIC

Foods and produce with this logo on it must be produced without the use of GMO's, and must be produced without the use of certain non-synthetic substances. (15) Processed products must have all ingredients being certified organic and all processing aids must also be organic. (16) Buy organic wherever possible.



NOM GMO

This label denotes that the ingredients in the product were not genetically modified. Genetically modified foods have been shown to indicate serious health risks in animal studies, from infertility and immune dysregulation to accelerated aging and more. (17) Avoid GM food whenever possible.

You will find many other food seals and claims out there like Kosher, Paleo, Natural, Vegan, Vegetarian, and more but the above are certified labels with stringent procedures ensuring they are compliant. Research any other claim made on packaging to be sure of what you are consuming.

IN CONCLUSION

So, you may be asking, “Well then , what do I eat?”

This guide should make you think twice about how much prepackaged food you should be eating. Nutrition label laws and FDA regulations are not looking out for your overall health in ways they would have you think. Look at the serving size, the macro composition, and most importantly the ingredients in foods before you eat them. Question every single ingredient in that list.

“Shop the perimeter of the grocery stores. Avoid aisles- this is where most processed foods are.”

Be critical of the foods you allow into your bodies, and for optimum health eat foods that come without labels, such as fresh organic produce, grass-fed and sustainably raised meats, raw dairy and pasture raised eggs. Wild caught fish. Keep your grains whole and sprouted and non-GMO. Organic nuts and seeds, soaked and sprouted are a wonderful addition to your diet. And be sure to include a variety of well sourced, organic cold pressed oils- don't be afraid of those fats! You need them!

Make sure to balance your macros with about 30 % protein 30% fat and 40% carbs, most of which should be luscious leafy greens.

Follow this advice and thrive!

You are now ready to shop smart! Thanks for reading.

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