

Nutrition Facts Label Guide

Learning how to read labels on food packaging can help you make quick, informed decisions about what foods to choose.



Compare the food labels of these two versions of canned tomatoes. The regular canned tomatoes (right) have 15 times as much sodium as the low-sodium canned tomatoes.

While fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and other less processed foods are important to a healthy diet, you can make smart choices about packaged or processed foods when you know what to look for. The array of items on the grocery store shelf can be confusing, but food labels can help you make healthier choices, such as items lower in sodium, saturated fat, sugar, and calories and higher in potassium and calcium.

The DASH eating plan can lower high blood pressure in as fast as two weeks. Eating less sodium creates even greater heart healthy benefits. Look for the sodium content in milligrams and the Percent Daily Value on Nutrition Facts labels and aim for foods that are less than 5 percent of the Daily Value of sodium. Foods with 20 percent or more Daily Value of sodium are considered high and can increase your blood pressure.

Low-sodium canned diced tomatoes

Nutrition Facts	
3 1/2 servings per container	
Serving Size	1/2 cup (130g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	25
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 10mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Total Sugars 0g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 400IU	8%
Vitamin C 9mg	10%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 230mg	5%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Canned diced tomatoes

Nutrition Facts	
3 1/2 servings per container	
Serving Size	1/2 cup (130g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	25
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 150mg	6%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Total Sugars 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 300IU	6%
Vitamin C 21mg	23%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 230mg	5%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Understanding the Nutrition Facts Label

Serving Size

- A serving size is the amount that people typically eat or drink.
- All of the information on the label, including the number of calories, is for one serving.
- A serving size is *not* a recommendation for how much you *should* eat or drink.

Nutrients

- The label shows key nutrients that affect your health.
- Choose foods with more dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.
- Choose foods with less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.

Nutrition Facts	
1 serving per container	
Serving Size	1 cup (227g)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	280
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 9g	12%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	23%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 35mg	12%
Sodium 850mg	37%
Total Carbohydrate 34g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 0g	
includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 15g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 320mg	25%
Iron 1.6mg	8%
Potassium 510mg	10%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Calories

- Calories are the measurement for how much energy your body gets from each serving.
- Nutrition labels are based on a daily diet of 2,000 calories, but you may need more or less depending on factors such as age and physical activity level.
- The number of servings you consume determines the number of calories you eat. For example, eating two servings of this product would be 560 calories.

Percent Daily Value (DV)

- This compares how much of a nutrient is in one serving of food to how much of that nutrient you need or should not exceed in a day.
- This is based on a daily diet of 2,000 calories.
- Generally, 5% DV or less is considered low; 20% or more DV is considered high.

WHAT DO THE PHRASES ON FOOD PACKAGING MEAN?

Food packaging often contains phrases that seem similar but have different meanings. That can make it difficult to make healthy choices. There are strict guidelines for the Nutrition Facts label, but there are other terms on cans, boxes, bags, and other packaging that you can look for when choosing foods as part of the DASH eating plan. The amount of sodium and fat are particularly important.

Sodium

Sodium free or salt free	Less than 5mg per serving
Very low sodium	35mg or less per serving
Low sodium	140mg or less per serving
Reduced or less sodium	At least 25% less than the regular version
Light in sodium or lightly salted	At least 50% less than the regular version
Unsalted or no salt added	No salt added to the product during processing (this is not a sodium-free food)

Fat

Fat-free	Less than .5g per serving
Low saturated fat	1g or less per serving and 15% or less of calories from saturated fat
Low-fat	3g or less per serving
Reduced fat	At least 25% less than the regular version

Small serving sizes (50g) or meals and main dishes are based on various weights in grams versus a serving size.