A FEW TIPS FOR USING FOOD LABELS

Sample label for Macaroni and Cheese

Nutrition Facts

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

Amount Per Serving

Calories 250 — Calories from Fat 110

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* 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

Food Labels are important to read when trying to find higher-quality foods for you and your family. There are two parts to the food label, the Nutrition Facts Label and the Ingredient List. Many details are identified on the Nutrition Facts (like the amount of proteins, fats and carbohydrates) but without investigating the Ingredient List, you are not getting the whole story!

Serving size

Tells how much you need to eat to get the corresponding amount of nutrients. It is not enough to check the amount of sugar before inhaling a bottle of your favorite sports drink—you also need to understand the number of servings contained in the bottle and multiply that by the number of sugar grams.

Fat

Tells the amount of fat by category. If it is trans fats you want to avoid it is important to read the ingredient list, even if trans fats are listed as "0g." There can still be some in the form of hydrogenated oils due to a government allowance for labels. Read ingredient lists to make sure it really isn't there!

Carbohydrates

Tells the number of carbs by category. If it is fiber you are seeking, read the ingredients to make sure the source of fiber is 100% whole grain such as wheat, rice, oats, rye or corn. If you are avoiding sugar, make sure you identify the source and avoid added sweeteners which take many forms such as high fructose corn syrup, words ended in "ose," fruit concentrates, malts, and syrups.

Ingredients

Listed by weight from heaviest to lightest, the first item you see is what you will be eating the most of. High quality foods have fewer ingredients and have the source of the food listed first. You should recognize the foods listed in the ingredients!

Label Claims

Often manufacturers put many health claims on their packaging. Never believe them without reading the ingredient list!

Low Fat — Unusually loaded with added sugars to make up lost flavor

Reduced sugar/sugar free — May be replaced with artificial sweeteners

Multigrain/Made with whole grains — May use refined grains with whole grains listed toward the end of the ingredient list

All Natural — Has no nutritional meaning whatsoever, not regulated by FDA

No trans fats — May still have hydrogenated oils in the ingredients

Contains real fruit — Check the source and position in ingredient list

Compare ingredients!

Mac and Cheese #1
Enriched Macaroni Product (Durum Wheat Flour with Niacin, Iron [Ferrous Sulfate], Thiamine Mononitrate, Riboflavin, Folic Acid), Cheddar Cheese ([Milk, Cheese Culture, Salt, Enzymes], Water, Whey, Partially Hydrogenated Soybean Oil, Sodium Phosphate, Salt, Milkfat, Sodium Alginate, Lactic Acid, Color [Oleoresin Paprika, Annatto Extract]).

Mac and cheese #2
Durum Semolina Pasta (Durum Semolina, Water), Cheddar Cheese (Cultured Pasteurized Milk, Salt, Enzymes), Whey, Buttermilk, Butter, Salt.

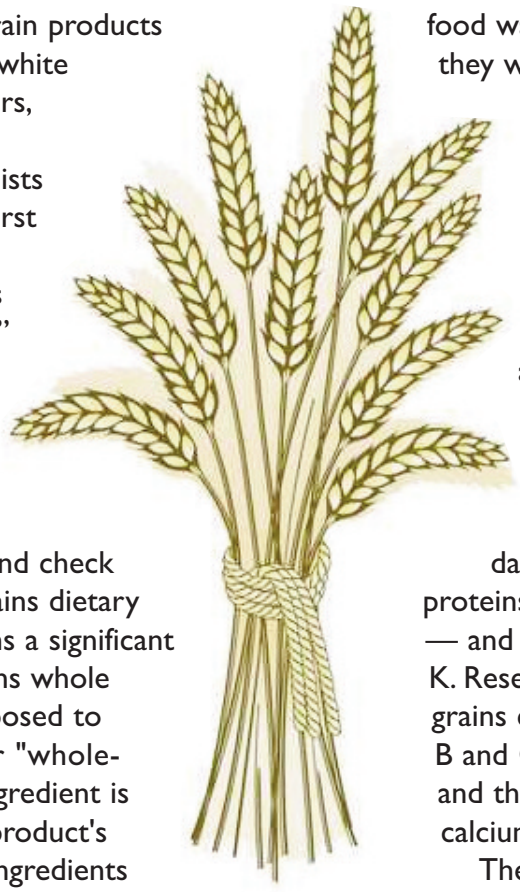
A Special Note on **GRAINS**

Whole Grains

Whole grains retain the bran and germ, well as the endosperm. In contrast, refined grains contain only the endosperm.

- Common whole-grain products include oatmeal, popcorn, brown rice, whole-wheat flour/bread, and sprouted grains.
- Common refined-grain products include white rice, white bread, pasta, crackers, pretzels.

Typically, if the ingredient lists the word "whole" with the first ingredient, the product is a whole-grain food item. Terms such as "enriched" or "white" usually indicate that the food lacks whole grain.



Another way to identify whole grains in the foods is to look in the nutritional facts information and check whether the food item contains dietary fiber. If the food item contains a significant amount, it most likely contains whole grains. "Wheat flour" (as opposed to "whole-grain wheat flour" or "whole-wheat flour") as the first ingredient is not a clear indicator of the product's whole grain content. If two ingredients are listed as grain products but only the second is listed as whole grain, the entire product may contain as little as 1% whole grain.

Enriched VS Fortified

Enriched means that vitamins or minerals have been added to the food to replace the original vitamins and minerals that were lost during the refining process. For example, if the food originally had iron, but the iron was lost during the refining process, the food will be 'enriched' to add the iron back into the food.

Fortified means that vitamins or minerals have been added to the food in addition to the levels that were originally found before the food was refined. When foods are fortified, they will have more vitamins and minerals after they are refined than they did before they are refined. A common example is milk, fortified with vitamin D.

Sprouted Grains

Grains are sprouted through a soaking process and are considered to have more nutrients than non-sprouted grains. A cup of these grains can contain as much as 25 percent of the recommended daily value for protein — complete proteins with all 10 essential amino acids — and high levels of vitamin A, B, C, E and K. Research has shown that sprouted grains contain more vitamins (especially B and C) than the grain seeds themselves, and that they are also fine sources of calcium and magnesium.

The sprouting process accomplishes part of the work of digestion for you. Starches are converted to sugars, fats are used up as energy for growth, and proteins are broken down into amino acids. They are also rich in active enzymes, which may further assist with their digestibility.