



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Center for Integrative Medicine

Understanding Nutrition Labels

Nutrition food labels provide information regarding energy (calories), fat, protein, carbohydrate, and fiber content, type of fat, and vitamin and mineral content. Investigate the ingredients on the label to identify whether foods are highly processed or not.

Here are some helpful hints when reading food labels.

•**If it says one thing, it's likely covering for something else.** Candies promoted as “fat-free” are typically loaded with sugar. Food products advertised as having “no sugar added” already have more than enough sugar; furthermore, this label is sometimes indicative of the addition of sugar substitutes.

•**If you can't define it, neither can your body.** If you struggle with defining label ingredients that seem like chemical names (or euphemisms), that's exactly what they are.

•**Preservatives that make food last longer on a grocer's shelf also make it last longer in the body.** MSG (monosodium glutamate) is one example of a preservative to avoid for digestive health.

•**Substitutes for sugar and fat are not more healthy.** Fat and sugar replacers abound. The problem is that they take one form in the food and another in the body. These products need to be seen for what they really are—unhealthy. It is especially important to avoid partially hydrogenated oils and high fructose corn syrup. Sugar alcohols such as sorbitol and mannitol can also irritate the digestive tract.

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%

How to Read A Food Label

The FDA has detailed instructions on how to read nutrition labels at their website:

<https://www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition/ucm274593.htm>