

Interactive Nutrition Label: Get the Facts

You may have noticed that there is nutrition information on many food packages in the grocery store. Canada introduced a new system for providing nutrition information on food labels in 2003. These new regulations are applicable to almost all prepackaged foods, ensuring the Nutrition Facts table has a consistent “look”, and making it easy to find and read. As of December 12, 2005, most companies are required to have a Nutrition Facts table on their food products.

To help you better understand the new food label, Health Canada has created a tool called the **Interactive Nutrition Label**. By exploring our new interactive tool, you can learn how to use nutrition information to make more informed choices about the foods you buy.

Crackers

Nutrition Facts ¹			
Per 4 crackers (20 g) ² ³			
Amount	% Daily Value		
Calories 90			
Fat 3 g	5 %		
Saturated Fat 0.5 g + Trans Fat 1 g	8 %		
Cholesterol 0 mg			
Sodium 132 mg	6 %		
Carbohydrate 14 g	5 %		
Fibre 2 g	8 %		
Sugars 2 g			
Protein 2 g			
Vitamin A	0 %	Vitamin C	0 %
Calcium	0 %	Iron	4 %
Ingredients: Whole wheat, vegetable oil shortening, salt.			

4

6

5

Low fat, cholesterol-free,
source of fibre

- 1) Nutrition Facts Table
- 2) Specific Amount of Food
- 3) % Daily Value
- 4) Core Nutrients
- 5) Nutrition Claims
- 6) List of ingredients



Following **Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide** can also help you make healthy food choices.

You can access Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide at:
<http://healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide>

How will the regulations be enforced?

The regulations will be enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

The Nutrition Facts Table

Easy to find, Easy to read



Whole Kernel Corn

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1/2 cup (125 mL)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 70	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated Fat 0 g + Trans Fat 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 250 mg	10 %
Carbohydrate 13 g	4 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %
Sugars 6 g	
Protein 2 g	
Vitamin A 1 %	Vitamin C 2 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 4 %

The **Nutrition Facts** table includes Calories and 13 nutrients: Fat, Saturated fat, Trans fat, Cholesterol, Sodium, Carbohydrate, Fibre, Sugars, Protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Calcium and Iron.

You can use the **Nutrition Facts** to:

- Compare products more easily
- Determine the nutritional value of foods
- Better manage special diets
- Increase or decrease your intake of a particular nutrient

Use the **Nutrition Facts** table to help you make informed choices. Making healthy food choices can help reduce your risk of nutrition-related chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

Not all food packages have a Nutrition Facts table

While almost all prepackaged foods are required to have a Nutrition Facts table, the following are examples of some foods that are exempt from the nutrition labelling requirements:

- Fresh fruit and vegetables
- Raw meat and poultry (except when ground), raw fish and seafood
- Foods prepared or processed at the store (bakery items, salads)
- Foods that contain very few nutrients such as coffee, tea, herbs and spices
- Alcoholic beverages

Specific Amount of Food

All the information in the Nutrition Facts table is based on a **specific amount of food**. Be sure to compare this amount to the amount you eat.

The first thing you should do when you read the Nutrition Facts is to:

- 1) Look at the **specific amount of food** listed.
- 2) Compare it to how much you actually eat.

Whole Wheat Bread

Nutrition Facts			
Per 2 slices (64 g)			
Amount	% Daily Value		
Calories 140			
Fat 1.5 g	2 %		
Saturated 0.3 g + Trans 0.5 g	4 %		
Cholesterol 0 mg			
Sodium 290 mg	12 %		
Carbohydrate 26 g	9 %		
Fibre 3 g	12 %		
Sugars 2 g			
Protein 5 g			
Vitamin A	0 %	Vitamin C	0 %
Calcium	4 %	Iron	10 %



The **specific amount** may be indicated by:

- **A phrase** such as: a slice, one egg, two cookies, followed by the metric measure.
- **Familiar household units** such as mL, cups, tablespoons, or a fraction or unit of food (e.g., $\frac{1}{4}$ pizza), followed by the metric measure (g, mL) (e.g., 175 g yogurt).

Specific Amount of Food

Comparing Cookies

Always look at the amount of food indicated in the Nutrition Facts table and compare it to the amount you actually eat.

Cookies

Nutrition Facts	
Per 2 cookies (30 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 150	
Fat 7 g	11 %
Saturated Fat 3 g + Trans Fat 1 g	20 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 80 mg	3 %
Carbohydrate 21 g	7 %
Fibre 1 g	4 %
Sugars 8 g	
Protein 1 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 8 %



Cookies

Nutrition Facts	
Per 4 cookies (30 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 130	
Fat 4 g	6 %
Saturated Fat 1 g + Trans Fat 1 g	10 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 80 mg	3 %
Carbohydrate 23 g	7 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 6 g	
Protein 2 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 8 %

In this example, for the same amount of weight as specified in the Nutrition Facts table (e.g., 30 g), the number of cookies is different.

Comparing One-portion Packages (e.g., yogourt)

For packages that are consumed as one portion (e.g., small containers of yogourt, individual-size packs of peanuts, juice-boxes), the nutrient information in the Nutrition Facts table applies to the whole package so that it is easier for people to know the amount of Calories and nutrients they are consuming.



Specific Amount of Food

Prepackaged Cake Mix

Some foods, such as prepackaged cake mixes, have different methods of preparation. For example, there may be a recipe for reducing the fat content, which in turn alters the nutrient information.

For these products, the Nutrition Facts table may have more than one column that provides different nutritional information depending on the way the product is prepared.

This cake mix package lists two different ways of making a cake. This is found in the Nutrition Facts table.

Chocolate Cake Mix

Nutrition Facts			
Per 1/12 package (83 g) (about 1/12 cake)			
Amount	Dry Mix	Original Recipe	Lower Fat Recipe
Calories	170	270	190
			% Daily Value
Fat 4.5 g*	7 %	23 %	9 %
Saturated 2 g + Trans 0.5 g	13 %	18 %	13 %
Cholesterol 0 mg			
Sodium 370 mg	15 %	15 %	15 %
Carbohydrate 33 g	11 %	11 %	11 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %	8 %	8 %
Sugars 20 g			
Protein 2 g			
Vitamin A	6 %	6 %	6 %
Vitamin C	0 %	0 %	0 %
Calcium	6 %	6 %	6 %
Iron	15 %	15 %	15 %
* Amount in dry mix			



The quantity of Calories and nutrients you consume depends on how much cake you eat and the method of preparation.

% Daily Value

Use the % Daily Value to see if a food has a little or a lot of a nutrient.

The % Daily Value is:

- a benchmark for evaluating the nutrient content of foods quickly and easily;
- based on recommendations for a healthy diet; and
- used to determine whether there is a lot or a little of a nutrient in a specific amount of food.

Use the % Daily Value to make food comparisons.

The % Daily Value provides a quick overview of the nutrient profile of the food, allowing product comparisons based on more than one nutrient. It puts nutrients on the same scale (0% - 100% Daily Value). You can quickly identify the strengths and weaknesses of a food product.

Here are two Nutrition Facts tables:

Sirloin Burger

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1 burger (130 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 340	
Fat 27 g	42 %
Saturated Fat 12 g + Trans Fat 2 g	70 %
Cholesterol 70 mg	
Sodium 330 mg	14 %
Carbohydrate 3 g	1 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 3 g	
Protein 24 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 30 %

Chicken Burger

Nutrition Facts	
Per burger (130 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 200	
Fat 9 g	14 %
Saturated Fat 2 g + Trans 1 g	15 %
Cholesterol 70 mg	
Sodium 500 mg	33 %
Carbohydrate 4 g	1 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 0 g	
Protein 25 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 4 %	Iron 2 %

The specific amount of food, listed in the Nutrition Facts, is the same for both products. Compare the % **Daily Value** to determine what product has the most iron.

% Daily Value

What is the Daily Value based on?

The Daily Values developed for nutrition labelling are generally based on recommendations for a healthy diet.

Daily Values are based on standards established for health outcomes, healthy growth and development and reduced risk of nutrition-related chronic disease. They therefore apply to most people.

In addition to listing the % Daily Value, the Nutrition Facts table also lists the actual amounts of some nutrients in grams or milligrams. People with specific dietary needs may need to use these values.

The % Daily Value is best used as a comparative benchmark when deciding between two food products.

How is the % Daily Value derived?

To calculate the % Daily Value, the actual amount of a nutrient (in the amount of food specified in the Nutrition Facts table) is divided by the nutrient's Daily Value and multiplied by 100.

Example for Iron:

The Daily Value for iron is 14 mg.

2 mg (amount of iron in a specific amount of food) / 14 mg (Daily Value for iron) X 100 = 15%

Therefore, a product with 2 mg of iron, in the amount of food specified in the Nutrition Facts table, would have a % Daily Value of 15%.

% Daily Value

How do you use the % Daily Value?

The % Daily Value helps you interpret the amount of each nutrient by putting them all on the same scale (0 - 100% Daily Value).

You can use the % Daily Value to see whether the nutrients you are trying to **increase** (e.g., fibre, vitamins A and C, calcium, iron) have **high** percentages in a food product.

For example, if you want to increase your fibre intake, when choosing between two breakfast cereals, select the cereal with the highest % Daily Value for fibre per comparable amount of cereal.

Manufacturers may highlight that a food product:

- with a **15% Daily Value** or more per specific amount is a **high** source of **calcium, vitamin A, iron or fibre**.
- with a **30% Daily Value** or more per specific amount is a **high** source of **vitamin C**.

You can also use the % Daily Value to see whether the nutrients you are trying to **decrease** (e.g., saturated and trans fats, cholesterol, sodium) have **low** percentages in a food product.

For example, if you want to decrease your intake of sodium, when choosing between two canned soups, select the soup with the lowest % Daily Value for sodium per comparable amount of soup.

Manufacturers may highlight that a food product:

- with a **5% Daily Value** or less per specific amount is **low** in **fat, sodium or cholesterol**.
- with a **10% Daily Value** or less per specific amount is **low** in **saturated and trans fats**.

Calories and Core Nutrients



Chicken Burger

Calories and core nutrients

Calories and the same core nutrients are always listed in the same order. A consistent look makes the Nutrition Facts table easy to find and use.

Nutrition Facts		
Per burger (130 g)		
Amount	% Daily Value	
Calories 200		
Fat 9 g	14 %	
Saturated Fat 2 g + Trans 1 g	15 %	
Cholesterol 70 mg		
Sodium 500 mg	33 %	
Carbohydrate 4 g	1 %	
Fibre 0 g	0 %	
Sugars 0 g		
Protein 25 g		
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C	0 %
Calcium 4 %	Iron	2 %



Calories and Core Nutrients

Calories

- If you eat more than the amount of food specified in the Nutrition Facts table, you will also be consuming more Calories than what is listed. Portion sizes influence the number of Calories consumed. For example, if the Nutrition Facts table has information based on 1 waffle and you eat 2 waffles, you will need to double the Calories and the amount of nutrients listed in order to calculate what your intake would actually be.

Your caloric needs vary, depending on your age, body size, gender, activity level and whether you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Fat

- The amount of fat listed in the Nutrition Facts table includes saturated fat, trans fat and all other fatty acids present in the food.

Choose lower-fat foods, including leaner meats, lower-fat milk products and foods prepared with little or no fat. By making these lower-fat choices more often, you will lower your intake of total fat, including saturated and trans fats.

Saturated and Trans Fats

- Most Canadians should reduce their intake of saturated and trans fats because they increase the risk for heart disease.
- Saturated fat and trans fat have been shown to raise blood LDL-cholesterol levels (a bad fat in the blood). Elevated LDL-cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease.
- Unlike saturated fat, trans fat also reduces blood HDL-cholesterol (a good fat in the blood). Reduced HDL-cholesterol is a risk factor for heart disease.
- Saturated fat and trans fat have one combined % Daily Value in the Nutrition Facts table because both types of fat have negative effects on blood cholesterol levels.

A healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats may reduce the risk of heart disease.

Tips to reduce saturated and trans fats

- Read the Nutrition Facts table to see the levels of saturated and trans fats.
- Choose vegetable oils such as canola, olive, corn, safflower, soybean, sunflower and peanut more often.
- Limit your use of hard margarine, shortening, lard and butter.
- Limit your consumption of products containing high amounts of palm, coconut oil or hydrogenated vegetable oils.
- Choose lower fat dairy products and leaner meats.

Calories and Core Nutrients

Cholesterol

- The % Daily Value for cholesterol is optional, so it may or may not be in the Nutrition Facts table. Whether or not the % Daily Value is displayed, the amount of cholesterol will be listed in milligrams.

Sodium

- Most Canadians get more salt than they need. It's best to limit your sodium intake.
- Most sodium comes from sodium chloride better known as table salt or sea salt.
- Salt is a common ingredient in processed and prepared foods, such as canned soups and processed meats.
- Sodium, without chloride, may also be added to foods through additives such as disodium phosphate, sodium nitrate, or sodium gluconate.

A healthy diet containing foods high in potassium and low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure, a risk factor for stroke and heart disease.

Carbohydrate

- There are different types of carbohydrates:
 - **Starch** such as in pasta and rice.
 - **Fibre** such as whole grain products (like whole grain bread, high fibre cereals), legumes (e.g., dried peas, beans and lentils), vegetables and fruit.
 - **Sugars** such as sucrose, glucose, fructose and dextrose.
- In the Nutrition Facts table, the total amount of carbohydrate is listed for the specified amount of food. This total amount includes starch, fibre and sugars.

Fibre

- Sources of fibre include whole grain and bran products (e.g., whole wheat, brown rice, whole rye, hulled barley, wheat bran, oats), vegetables, fruit and legumes (e.g., dried peas, beans and lentils).

Calories and Core Nutrients

Sugars

- Sugars occur naturally in foods, such as those found in milk, fruit and vegetables. Sugars are also added to foods in many forms: sugar or sucrose, brown sugar, glucose, fructose, dextrose, liquid invert sugar, molasses, honey, maple syrup and corn syrup.
- Added sugars contribute mainly Calories and taste and have no significant nutritional advantages.
- There is no % Daily Value for sugars because there is no generally accepted target recommendation for the healthy population.
- Sugars may promote dental caries.

People with lower caloric needs may not need to consume extra Calories from sugars.

Protein

- Protein is found in a variety of foods such as meat, poultry, fish, legumes (e.g., dried peas, beans and lentils), nuts, milk products and grain products.
- There is no % Daily Value for protein because protein intake is generally adequate for Canadians who consume a mixed diet.

Vitamin A

- Vitamin A is based on a recommended daily intake. In the Nutrition Facts table, vitamin A is listed only as a % Daily Value, which makes it easier for consumers to understand the relative amount of this nutrient present in a food product.

Vitamin C

- Vitamin C is based on a recommended daily intake. In the Nutrition Facts table, vitamin C is listed only as a % Daily Value, which makes it easier for consumers to understand the relative amount of this nutrient present in a food product.

Calories and Core Nutrients

Calcium

- Calcium is based on a recommended daily intake. In the Nutrition Facts table, calcium is listed only as a % Daily Value, which makes it easier for consumers to understand the relative amount of this nutrient present in a food product.

A healthy diet with adequate calcium and vitamin D, and regular physical activity, help to achieve strong bones and may reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Iron

- Iron is based on a recommended daily intake. In the Nutrition Facts table, iron is listed only as a % Daily Value, which makes it easier for consumers to understand the relative amount of this nutrient present in a food product.

What about other nutrients?

- The core nutrients must be listed in the Nutrition Facts table, along with any other nutrients related to any nutrition claims on the package or any nutrients that have been added to the product.
- It is not mandatory that the Nutrition Facts table include each and every nutrient present in the food, only the 13 core nutrients and Calories need to be included. The absence of a “non-core” nutrient in the Nutrition Facts does not mean that the nutrient is not in the food.
- Manufacturers may include in the Nutrition Facts other nutrients from a defined list (such as other vitamins, minerals, types of fat, sugar alcohols and starch). Information on any other food constituents may appear outside the Nutrition Facts table (e.g., phytochemicals such as isoflavone or carotenoids such as lycopene).

Nutrition Claims

Use **nutrition claims** to make informed food choices.

The Government has rules in place that must be met before a nutrition claim can be made on a label or advertisement. The rules for nutrition claims apply to all foods, prepackaged and not prepackaged, no matter where they are sold.

A manufacturer can choose whether or not to include nutrition claims on the label or in the advertisement of a food.

Many products will have nutrition claims as these claims highlight a feature of interest to consumers.

Examples of claims

✦ Source of Fibre

Manufacturers of food can highlight a product's nutrition features using claims such as "Source of fibre". "Source of fibre" means the food contains at least 2 grams of dietary fibre in the amount of food specified in the Nutrition Facts table.

✦ Low Fat

"Low" is always associated with a very small amount. "Low fat" means that the food contains no more than 3 grams of fat in the amount of food specified in the Nutrition Facts table. In a healthy diet, the recommended range for fat intake is approximately one third of total Calories.

✦ Cholesterol-free

The claim "Cholesterol-free" means that the product has a negligible amount (less than 2 mg of cholesterol in the amount of food specified in the Nutrition Facts table) and it is also low in saturated fat and trans fat.

✦ Sodium-free

"Free" is an amount of a nutrient so small that health experts consider it nutritionally insignificant. A "sodium-free" claim means the amount of food specified in the Nutrition Facts table contains less than 5 mg of sodium.

✦ Reduced in Calories

"Reduced in Calories" has at least 25% less energy (Calories) than the food it is being compared to.

✦ Light

When referring to a nutritional characteristic of a product, "light" is allowed only on foods that are either "reduced in fat" or "reduced in energy" (Calories). "Light" can also be used to describe sensory characteristics of a food, provided that the characteristic is clearly identified with the claim (e.g., light tasting, light coloured).

Nutrition Claims

How do you use Nutrient Content Claims?

When you want to **decrease** the amount of certain nutrients, look for the following types of claims:

<u>Claims</u>	<u>What it means</u>
Free	None or hardly any of this nutrient (e.g., "Sodium-free")
Low	A small amount (e.g., "Low fat")
Reduced	At least 25% less of the nutrient than in a similar product (e.g., "Reduced in Calories")
Light	Only allowed on labels of foods that are "reduced in fat" or "reduced in Calories". It could also refer to the sensory characteristics of the food such as "light in colour". The characteristic of light will always be indicated on the food label.

When you want to **increase** the amount of certain nutrients, look for the following types of claims:

<u>Claims</u>	<u>What it means</u>
Source	Contains a useful amount of nutrient (e.g., "Source of fibre")
High or good source	Contains a high amount of the nutrient (e.g., "High source of vitamin C")
Very high or excellent source	Contains a very high amount of the nutrient (e.g., "Excellent source of calcium")

Nutrition Claims

More Examples of Nutrition Claims

Source of omega-3 poly-unsaturated fatty acids

Low in saturated fat

Free of trans fatty acids

Cholesterol-free

- Nutrition claims are optional. It is up to manufacturers to see if their product meets the criteria for a claim, and then to put the claim on the food label.
- Many products will have nutrition claims as these claims highlight a feature of interest to consumers.
- Use nutrition claims as a starting point but do not rely only on them to make comparisons. Use the Nutrition Facts to get the full details.

Why are there claims on some products and not on other, similar products?

There are nutrition claims on some products but not on others because nutrition claims are optional. Manufacturers can choose whether or not to put a nutrition claim on their product if it meets the criteria set out in the regulations.

What are Health Claims?

Health claims are a type of nutrition claim. Health claims about the following diet/health relationships are permitted:

- a healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats may reduce the risk of heart disease;
- a healthy diet with adequate calcium and vitamin D, and regular physical activity, help to achieve strong bones and may reduce the risk of osteoporosis;
- a healthy diet rich in a variety of vegetables and fruit may help reduce the risk of some types of cancer; and
- a healthy diet containing foods high in potassium and low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure, a risk factor for stroke and heart disease.

List of Ingredients



Bran Cereal

Ingredients: Whole wheat, wheat bran, sugar/glucose-fructose, salt, malt (corn flour, malted barley), vitamins (thiamine hydrochloride, pyridoxine hydrochloride, folic acid, d-calcium pantothenate), minerals (iron, zinc oxide).

The list of ingredients is mandatory and has been on the food product package for many years. All of the ingredients for a food are listed in descending order by weight. The ingredients present in the greatest amount in a product are listed first. Therefore, in this example, *whole wheat* is the ingredient present in the greatest amount, since it is listed first.

The list of ingredients is also a source of information for people who want to avoid certain ingredients or verify the presence of an ingredient in a food.

Sugars in food

The list of ingredients helps to identify sources of certain nutrients such as sugars. The Nutrition Facts table gives the content of sugars from all sources (naturally occurring sugars and added sugars, if any). To find out if sugars have been added, you need to look at the ingredient list. Examples of sugars include: corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, malt syrup, invert sugar and concentrated fruit juice.