

Label Reading

** www.eatwise.ca **

In General:

- ✓ Labels help us compare products more easily, see the nutritional value of the foods we eat, better manage special diets and help you to increase or decrease your intake of a specific nutrient.
- ✓ Calories and 13 core nutrients are always listed in the same order. The number of grams is the actual amount (quantity) of nutrient in the food (even if the number is zero it will still appear on the label).
- ✓ Some foods are exempt from having labeling – fresh fruits & vegetables; raw meat & poultry (except when ground); raw fish & seafood; items with tiny amounts of the 13 core nutrients such as coffee, tea, herbs, spices; alcoholic beverages; foods sold in restaurants, food courts, cafeterias, road side stands, craft shows, flea markets, in-store bakeries & delis; bulk food.

Serving Size:

- ✓ Always compare what you eat to the serving size listed. If you eat double the amount remember to double all the nutrients.

% Daily Value:

- ✓ This is based on a 2000 calorie diet. The % Daily Value tells you whether or not there is a little or a lot of a nutrient in the food. Use % Daily Value to compare the nutrient content of one food to another. As a general rule 5% or less is LOW (aim for this in fat, cholesterol and sodium) & 15% or more is HIGH (aim for this in vitamins, minerals and fibre). These %Daily Values are for the entire day, not just one meal or snack.

Calories – Tells how many calories are in one serving.

Fat – The levels of **healthier** fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated) should be higher than the levels of **unhealthy** fat (saturated and trans). Trans fat must now be listed on the labels. ****GOAL=3 grams or less per serving****

Sodium – It is generally recommended that people limit their sodium intake to 1500mg per day. ****GOAL=200mg or less per serving****

Carbohydrates – 15 grams of carbohydrates equals one carbohydrate serving. *Canada's Food Guide* recommends 6-8 servings of grain products per day.

Fiber – Aim for 25 – 35 grams of fiber per day. Claims are: "SOURCE" contains at least 2gms per serving; "HIGH SOURCE" contains at least 4gms per serving; "VERY HIGH SOURCE" contains at least 6gms per serving. ****GOAL=3 grams or more per serving****

Sugar – ****GOAL=8 grams of sugar or less per serving**** (4grms=1tsp)

List of Ingredients – Listed in order from highest to lowest by weight. Beware of products that have sugar, fat or salt listed in the first 3 ingredients. Try to use food products that have a short list of natural ingredients.

Corporations (Pepsi, Blue Menu, Nabisco) will use their own symbol on their food products which can be deceiving to the public as it's not regulated. Companies pay to have this on their label but this does not mean the food is healthy

Nutrition Claims:

- ✓ Government sets rules that must be met before a claim can be made on a label.
- ✓ Some claims on a label such as "promoting vitality" may or may not be accurate but since they are not regulated, the company wouldn't have to prove it.
- ✓ "LITE" or "LIGHT" may refer to color, texture, flavor as well as fat, alcohol or sodium.
- ✓ "NATURAL" tells you that the food contains no added vitamin/mineral, artificial flavoring agent or food additive – it does not mean the food is healthier and this claim is not regulated.
- ✓ "ORGANIC" is a regulated claim and must meet certain qualifications (pesticide, hormone & antibiotic free as well as Non-GMO & Non-cloned) in order to be reported on the label.
- ✓ "NO SUGAR ADDED" does not mean "sugar-free". Natural sugars may be present but have not been added to the product.
- ✓ A claim may also highlight a relationship between diet and disease. For example: "A healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats may reduce the risk of heart disease"
- ✓ ENERGY listed on a label just means a product has calories!