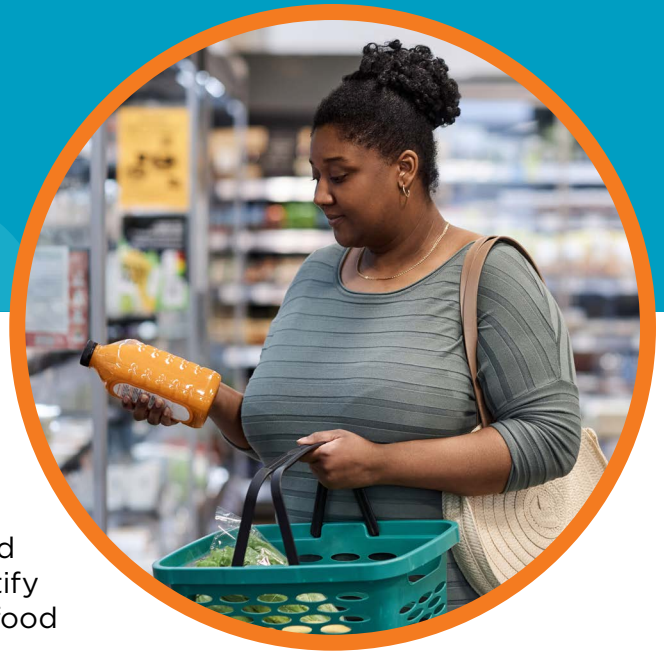


# Reading FOOD LABELS



Learning to understand what the numbers on a Nutrition Facts label mean can help you make healthier food choices. However, there are a lot of numbers, which can get confusing. This guide will help you better understand what the different numbers and terms mean. With practice, you should be able to compare two different food labels and identify which food option is a healthier choice. The example food label below is from boxed macaroni and cheese.

## Serving Size and Calories

- All nutrition facts are based on one “serving” or portion.
- In this example, one cup of prepared macaroni is 360 calories. Two cups or two servings have 720 calories in total. There are 1,080 calories in the entire box.
- Consuming more calories than your body uses in a day leads to weight gain.

## % Daily Value (%DV)

- **% Daily Value (%DV)** is the amount that each nutrient in one serving contributes to your daily diet.
- Consume nutrients like fiber, vitamins, and minerals in larger amounts (a %DV of 20% or more).
- Consume nutrients like total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium in lower amounts (a %DV of 5% or less).

## Nutrition Facts

About 3 servings per container

**Serving size** **2.5 oz (70g/ about 1/3 Box)**  
(Makes about 1 cup)

	per 2.5 oz dry mix	Per 1 cup prepared*
<b>Calories</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>360</b>
	<b>%DV**</b>	<b>%DV**</b>
<b>Total Fat</b>	2g <b>3%</b>	12g <b>16%</b>
Saturated Fat	1g <b>4%</b>	4g <b>19%</b>
Trans Fat	0g	0g
<b>Cholesterol</b>	5mg <b>2%</b>	10mg <b>3%</b>
<b>Sodium</b>	600mg <b>26%</b>	750mg <b>33%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	49g <b>18%</b>	50g <b>18%</b>
Dietary Fiber	1g <b>5%</b>	1g <b>5%</b>
Total Sugars	7g	8g
Incl. Added Sugars	0g <b>0%</b>	0g <b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b>	9g	10g
Vitamin D	0mcg 0%	0mcg 0%
Calcium	160mg 10%	180mg 15%
Iron	2.8mg 15%	2.9mg 15%
Potassium	280mg 6%	310mg 6%

\*As prepared using margarine with 0g Trans Fat and 2% reduced fat milk.

\*\*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.

## Potassium and Kidney Health

- If you have kidney disease, your doctor may recommend eating less potassium. If this is the case, look for foods that have less than 200 milligrams (mg) of potassium per serving.



# READING FOOD LABELS

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
About 3 servings per container			
<b>Serving size</b>		<b>2.5 oz (70g/ about 1/3 Box)</b>	
<b>(Makes about 1 cup)</b>			
	per 2.5 oz dry mix	Per 1 cup prepared*	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>360</b>	
	<b>%DV**</b>	<b>%DV**</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b>	2g <b>3%</b>	12g	<b>16%</b>
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<b>Protein</b>	9g	10g	
Vitamin D	0mcg 0%	0mcg	0%
Calcium	160mg 10%	180mg	15%
Iron	2.8mg 15%	2.9mg	15%
Potassium	280mg 6%	310mg	6%

\*As prepared using margarine with 0g Trans Fat and 2% reduced fat milk.

\*\*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.

## Heart and Kidney Health

- Unhealthy fats include **trans fats** and **saturated fats**. Choose foods that have 0 grams (g) of trans fat per serving and are low in saturated fats (less than 2 g per serving).
- Some fats, like **polyunsaturated fats** and **monounsaturated fats**, are heart-healthy. These are good to eat. Amounts may not be listed on the food label.
- **Sodium** is a component of salt and is used to preserve many foods. Lowering salt intake helps lower blood pressure. The recommended daily limit of sodium is 2,300 mg, but your doctor may recommend less. Choose foods that have a %DV of 5% or less of sodium.
  - » In this example, 600 mg of sodium per serving (or 26% of the recommended daily value) is very high.

## Nutritional Value

- **Total carbohydrate** is the amount of fiber, sugar, and starch per serving.
- **Fiber** is a part of plant foods that is not easily digested and helps you feel full for longer. Most people living in the United States do not eat enough fiber. Aim for about 25 g of fiber per day by choosing foods that have a %DV of 20% or more of fiber. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds are good places to start.
- **Total sugars** is the total amount per serving of naturally occurring sugars (found in fruits, vegetables, and dairy) *and* **added sugars**, which are added during processing to sweeten foods.
- Maximize the nutritional value of foods you eat by choosing foods that are high in fiber and low in added sugars. The daily value for added sugars is 50 g or less per day. Choose foods with a %DV of 5% or less of added sugars.



## KNOWLEDGE CHECK

Below are two popular breakfast cereals. Compare the Nutrition Facts labels to see which of the two is a healthier breakfast option.

**OPTION A**  
Fruity Cereal

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
About 6 servings per container			
<b>Serving size</b>		<b>1 1/3 Cup</b>	
	Cereal	With 3/4 cup skim milk	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>210</b>	
	<b>%DV*</b>	<b>%DV*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b>	1.5g <b>2%</b>	1.5g	<b>2%</b>
Saturated Fat	0.5g <b>3%</b>	1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat	0g	0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat	0g	0g	
Monounsaturated Fat	0g	0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0mg <b>0%</b>	<5mg	<b>1%</b>
<b>Sodium</b>	210mg <b>9%</b>	280mg	<b>12%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	34g <b>12%</b>	43g	<b>16%</b>
Dietary Fiber	2g <b>8%</b>	2g	<b>8%</b>
Total Sugars	12g	22g	
Incl. Added Sugars	12g <b>24%</b>	12g	<b>24%</b>
<b>Protein</b>	2g	8g	
Vitamin D	2mcg 10%	4.2mcg	20%
Calcium	0mg 0%	220mg	15%
Iron	4.5mg 25%	4.5mg	25%
Potassium	60mg 0%	340mg	6%

\*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.

**OPTION B**  
100% Whole Grain Oats

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
About 13 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>1/2 cup dry (40g)</b>
per 2.5 oz dry mix	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>150</b>
	<b>%DV*</b>
<b>Total Fat</b> 3g	<b>4%</b>
Saturated Fat 0.5g	<b>3%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
Polyunsaturated Fat 1g	
Monounsaturated Fat 1g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 27g	<b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>13%</b>
Soluble Fiber 2g	
Total Sugars 1g	
Incl. 0g Added Sugars	<b>0%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 20mg	0%
Iron 1.5mg	8%
Potassium 150mg	2%

\*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.

## NUTRITION FACTS QUIZ

Answers on next page.

1. Which has more calories per serving? One serving of Option A (1 1/3 cup cereal with 3/4 cup skim milk) or Option B (1/2 cup oatmeal prepared in water)?
2. Which has more total fat per serving?
3. Which option is lower in sodium?
4. Which option has better nutritional value?

# NUTRITION FACTS QUIZ ANSWERS

## 1. Which has more calories per serving? One serving of Option A (1 1/3 cup fruity cereal with 3/4 cup skim milk) or Option B (1/2 cup oatmeal prepared in water)?

- » **Answer: Option A is higher in calories.**
- » Although the total calories of unprepared cereal (Option A) and unprepared oatmeal (Option B) are the same (150 calories), adding milk to the cereal increases the total calorie count per serving to 210 calories.

## 2. Which has more total fat per serving?

- » **Answer: Option B has more total fat per serving.**
- » Both options contain 0.5 g of saturated fat and 0 g of trans fat. Both of these are unhealthy fats and can raise “bad” cholesterol levels. Try to limit these types of fat in your diet. If you look carefully, the total fat content of Option B is made up of more heart-healthy fats. Option B has 1 g of polyunsaturated fat and 1 g of monounsaturated fat per serving. These types of fat can help raise “good” cholesterol levels and lower “bad” cholesterol levels. Even though Option B may appear to be unhealthy at first, it is actually the healthier option.

## 3. Which option is lower in sodium?

- » **Answer: Option B is lower in sodium.**
- » Option B contains 0 mg of sodium, whereas one serving of prepared cereal (Option A) contains 280 mg of sodium, or 12% of the daily recommended amount of sodium.

## 4. Which option has better nutritional value?

- » **Answer: Option B has better nutritional value.**
- » Option B has 4 g of dietary fiber, 1 g of total sugars, and 0 g of added sugars per serving. Option A has less dietary fiber (2 g) per serving and 12 g of added sugars. Adding milk to the cereal raises the total sugars to 22 g (10 g of naturally occurring sugars in milk and 12 g of added sugars from the cereal).

**Nutrition Facts labels have a lot of information that can help you make healthier food choices.**

If you have any remaining questions about making healthy food choices, please let your Healthmap Solutions Care Navigation team member know so you can be connected with a registered dietitian.

