

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL—Pinellas County

UNDERSTANDING FOOD LABELS

Research has shown that eating a well-balanced, nutritious diet reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, strokes, some types of cancer, and osteoporosis. Grocery store shelves are full of foods with packaging promising they are healthier than their competitors.

However, it's important to take a close look at the nutritional values, ingredients and calorie counts in the food you're buying, and to understand how they factor into your family's healthy eating.

Food labels provide this information and allow you to make informed healthy food choices to help meet your family's nutritional needs.

Food Label Information

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) require labels on almost all packaged foods that include nutrition information. The information usually appears on the back or side of packaging under the title "Nutrition Facts." It is also displayed in grocery stores near fresh foods, like fruits, vegetables and fish.

Nutrition facts usually include:

- ◆ a column of information, "% Daily Value," that shows what portion of the amount of daily recommended nutrients the product provides.
- ◆ information about saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, fiber, sugar and calories from fat.
- ◆ serving sizes that are close to the amount that people actually eat.
- ◆ health claims, such as "light" or "low fat," that must meet strict government definitions so they are accurate and consistent from one food to another.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (114g)
Serving Per Container 4

Amount Per Serving		% Daily Value*	
Calories	90	Calories from Fat	30
Total Fat	3g		5%
Saturated Fat	0g		0%
Cholesterol	0mg		0%
Sodium	300mg		13%
Total Carbohydrate	13g		4%
Dietary Fiber	3g		12%
Sugars	3g		
Protein	3g		
Vitamin A	80%	Vitamin C	60%
Calcium	4%	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

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

(Label graphic from www.niehs.nih.gov)

A food is considered a good source of a nutrient if the daily percentage it supplies is between 10% and 19%. If it supplies more than 20%, the food is considered high in that nutrient.

Know the Facts

Manufacturers often make claims about the healthfulness of a food on the front of a package - like "fat free" or "no cholesterol." Many people wonder if they can trust these claims to be true. The fact is, the FDA does require food makers to provide scientific evidence in order to make those claims. Even so, it's a good idea to carefully read the claims and understand what they mean.

- ◆ **Reduced fat**
25% less fat than the same regular product.
- ◆ **Light**
50% less fat than the same regular product
- ◆ **Low fat**
less than 3 grams of fat per serving
- ◆ **Fat Free**
less than 0.5g of fat or saturated fat per serving
- ◆ **Low sodium**
140 mg of sodium or less
- ◆ **Good Source of Fiber**
2.5 g to 4.9 g of fiber per serving
- ◆ **Low Cholesterol**
20 mg or less
- ◆ **Cholesterol Free**
less than 2 mg per serving
- ◆ **Sugar Free**
less than 0.5 g of sugar per serving
- ◆ **Low Calorie**
40 calories or less per serving

Be skeptical of low-fat junk food. If the fat has been eliminated or cut back, the amount of sugar in the food may have increased.

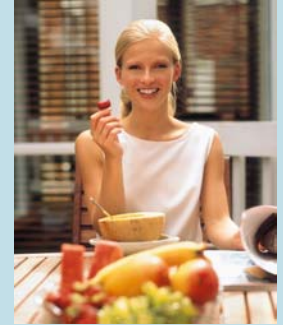
Many low-fat foods have nearly as many calories as their full-fat versions. Likewise, check the labels of low-carb versions, which may be high in fat and calories.

(www.kidshealth.org and www.diabetes.org)

Using Food Labels to Create a Well-Balanced Diet

As a parent, you can use food labels to your advantage to plan nutritious and healthy meals for your children. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind:

- Offer your children a variety of healthy and nutritious food.
- Choose a diet low in total fat, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. Limit total fat intake to no more than 30% of total calories per day.
- Read serving size information. What looks like a small package of food can actually contain more than one serving.
- Limit foods with added sugar.
- Pay attention to the amount of sodium in the foods you buy.
- Choose healthy snacks. Healthy snacks should include fruits, vegetables and whole-grains.



Read all the labels on the foods you normally buy and use your new food label savvy to create a healthy diet. It will go a long way toward meeting your family's nutritional needs!

(www.kidshealth.org)

Milk Matters!



Health Tip

DID YOU KNOW?
Children between the ages of 9-18 need 1,300mg of calcium a day. (About 4 cups of milk)



There are lots of different calcium-rich foods to choose from, making it easy for your children to get the calcium they need every day. Refer to food labels to tell you how much calcium is in one serving of food. Look at the Percentage Daily Value (% DV) next to the calcium number on the food label.

(www.nichd.nih.gov)

Try these easy ideas for including calcium throughout the day.

Breakfast:

- Pour low-fat, fat-free or soy milk over your breakfast cereal.
- Have a cup of low-fat or fat-free yogurt.
- Drink a glass of orange juice with added calcium.
- Add low-fat or fat-free milk instead of water to oatmeal and hot cereal.

Lunch:

- Add low-fat or fat-free cheese to a sandwich.
- Have a glass of low-fat or fat-free milk instead of soda.
- Create mini-pizzas by topping whole-wheat English muffins or bagels with pizza sauce, low-fat mozzarella cheese, and toppings like mushrooms, green peppers, tomatoes, or chunks of grilled chicken.
- Add low-fat or fat-free milk instead of water to tomato soup.

Snack:

- Make a smoothie with fruit, ice, and low-fat or fat-free milk
- Try flavored low-fat or fat-free milk such as chocolate or strawberry.
- Try some pudding made with low-fat or fat-free milk.
- Dip fruits and vegetables into yogurt.
- Have some low-fat or fat-free string cheese.



Dinner:

- Make a salad with dark green, leafy vegetables.
- Serve broccoli or cooked, dry beans as a side dish.
- Top salads, soups and stews with low-fat shredded cheese
- Toss tofu with added calcium into stir fry and other dishes.

(www.nichd.nih.gov)



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For information about **Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County** visit our website: www.StepsFL.com or call 2-1-1 (Pinellas County cell phone users must call 727-210-4211)