



Read Food Labels

CHALLENGE

Take time to learn about what you're eating

Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Read Food Labels"
2. Create a plan to read food labels when you go shopping, cook at home or dine out.
3. Keep a record of your completed health challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



When California resident Raul Robles was hungry, he grabbed fast food. And not just burgers and fries. He also drank two liters of soda a day. He didn't think much about how many calories he was taking in. The food was quick and cheap.

But it wasn't sustainable, and his health was going downhill fast.

"I weighed 344 pounds," says Raul.¹ "I was diabetic, dealing with high blood pressure issues, and, in general, unhappy with my life."

Something had to change. After working with his doctor and taking a nutrition class, Raul started reading food labels. And then he had a lightbulb moment...

"I discovered that I was eating between 5,000 to 7,000 calories on a daily basis," says Raul.

After taking a closer look at food labels and his diet, Raul made some changes.

Food-Label Fun

How much do you know about food labels? Take this quiz to find out.



T F

1. One small package of food is usually just one serving.
2. You should avoid or limit foods high in saturated fat, added sugar, and sodium.
3. Food labels recommend adults eat about 3,000 calories a day.
4. Ingredients on a food label are listed by amount from largest to smallest.
5. Fresh fruits and vegetables don't come with a food label, but they're low in calories and high in nutrients.

How did you do? If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, you could benefit from learning more about how to read food labels. Food labels recommend 2,000 calories per day for the average adult. Just because a drink or package of food is small, doesn't mean it's a single serving.

Answers: 1. False. 2. True. 3. False. 4. True. 5. True.

He:

- Quit drinking diet soda and eating fast food
- Began eating a lot more fruits and vegetables
- Added regular exercise to his daily routine
- Read food labels for everything

Little by little, he started to tip the scale in the right direction. For two years, he read food labels, tracked everything in his diet, and exercised regularly.

"I have lost over 150 pounds," says Raul.

"I continue to count my calories, exercise on a regular basis, and truly enjoy my life now."

Want to improve your diet and your health? Take the month-long health challenge to Read Food Labels.

Video: How to read a food label
<https://tinyurl.com/4f8f9eky>

Read Food Labels: 10 Things to Look For

Pick up a package of food at the grocery store, and chances are pretty good it includes a food label. Restaurants with more than 20 locations must publish nutrition information too.³ If you want to improve your diet and your health, read food labels.



Here's what to look for:

1 Serving Size

Most people aren't very good at guessing serving sizes. So they eat more than they should. Check the food label to see how much a serving size really is.

Tip: You might be surprised that a small bag or package of food actually contains two or three servings.

2 Calories

If you're watching your weight, you should know how many calories you're consuming per day.

Do this: Look for calories per serving on the food label. Keep track using a food diary or mobile app.

3 Sugar

Limit sugar to no more than:

- 36 grams per day for men
- 20 grams per day for women

Sugary drinks, cereals, and sweets are all high in added sugar. The problem with too much sugar: It can lead to weight gain and other chronic diseases.

Sugar rush: A typical 20-ounce bottle of soda contains 65g of sugar...a lot more than the daily limit.

4 Sodium

The American Heart Association recommends eating less than 2,300 mg of sodium per day. If you have high blood pressure, your daily sodium intake should be 1,500 mg or less.⁴

Check sodium content: Many frozen and packaged microwave meals contain 600 to 1,200 mg of sodium per meal. Fast foods like burgers, fries, and pizza are high in sodium, too.

5 Fiber

Did you know the average adult in the U.S. only eats about 16g of fiber per day?⁵ And it's not enough.

- Women need 25 grams of fiber per day.
- Men need 38 grams per day.

Eating foods high in fiber control weight, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels, and improves digestion. Whole-grains, fruits, and vegetables are the best fiber sources.

6 Good fats vs. bad fats

Avoid or limit foods with saturated fats (like cheese and red meats) and trans fats (like desserts, margarine, crackers, and fast food). Aim to eat more foods with healthy fats like fish, nuts and seeds, and olive oil.

7 Cholesterol

Foods like meat and dairy products are high in LDL (bad) cholesterol. They can raise your risk for heart disease and other

Food Labels & The 5-Second Rule



If you already eat well and exercise at least 30 minutes a day, keep it up. But what if your diet needs a makeover? What does it take to change the way you eat?

Start reading food labels. It only takes a few seconds to read a food label, look for specific information, and then make a decision.

In a recent study, researchers found that reading food labels helped people, eat:²

- -6.6% fewer calories
- -10.6% less fat
- -13% less junk food
- +13.5% more vegetables



Train your brain: Reading food labels helps you be more aware of what you're eating. Get the skinny on things like serving size, calories, sodium, sugar, fat, and ingredients, and then make a choice.

health problems. Fortunately, eating more fiber-rich foods can raise HDL (good) cholesterol levels and protect your heart.

8 Protein

Protein needs vary based on things like age, weight, and activity level. Your body needs protein for bones, muscle, hair, blood, and more. How much protein do you need?⁶

Do the math: (Weight) x (0.36) = Minimum daily protein needs

9 Percent Daily Value

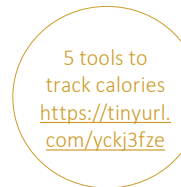
The right column on the food label shows you the recommended Percent Daily Value for each nutrient. Each value is based on 2,000 calories a day. You may need less.

10 Ingredients

What's in your food? Check the list of ingredients on the food label. They're listed in order by amount from largest to smallest.

- **Made with whole grains or refined grains?** Check the ingredients.
- **Highly processed?** Check the ingredients for chemicals, food colorings, and additives.

Tip: Less processed + fewer ingredients = healthier food



Want to improve your diet and your health? Read food labels.

References

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Read Food Labels

CHALLENGE

Take time to learn about what you're eating

Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, or add to your digital calendar).
2. Create a plan to read food labels when you go shopping, cook at home or dine out.
3. Use the calendar to record your actions and choices to read food labels for everything you eat.
4. Review your progress at the end of each day, week, and at the end of the month. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH: _____							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
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_____ Number of days this month I read food labels
 _____ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:

 Name _____ Date _____