HOW TO READ FOOD LABELS & UNDERSTAND CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE

Canada's Food Guide provides many tips to help you buy the healthiest choices from each of the food groups. Reading labels can help you decide which products are best for you.

All the information on the Nutrition Facts is based on a specific amount of food. You can use the Nutrition Facts table to:

- Compare products more easily.
- Determine the nutritional value of foods.
- Help you choose a product with more or less of a particular nutrient.

WHAT IS THE NUTRITION FACTS TABLE?

The Nutrition Facts table gives you information on the amount of 13 core nutrients and calories in an amount of food. Use this information and the % Daily Value (% DV) to choose and compare food products for a healthier you. Reading the ingredient list can also help you make better food choices.

WHERE DO YOU FIND THE NUTRITION FACTS TABLES?

Almost all pre-packaged foods have a Nutrition Facts table. It looks the same on most foods. This makes it easy to find and easy to read.

Not all foods need to have a Nutrition Facts table. These foods are not required to have a Nutrition Facts table:

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

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Have Vegetables and Fruits Fresh, Frozen or Canned

- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables without breading or rich sauces.

- Look for canned vegetables lower in sodium or drain and rinse canned vegetables which can lower the salt content.

- Choose unsweetened frozen fruit or fruit packed in juice. Fruit in heavy syrup has more sugar and calories.

Choose Vegetables and Fruit More Often than Juice

- Eating vegetables and fruit provides more fiber than juice.

- When having juice, pick 100% fruit juice over fruit flavored drinks, punches or cocktails. Fruit flavored drinks do not count as Food Guide Servings or vegetables and fruit.

- Choose lower sodium vegetable juices – many vegetable juices contain a lot of added sodium.

Choose Vegetables and Fruit Prepared With Little or No Added Fat, Sugar or Salt

- Skip the French fries, poutine, and other deep fried vegetables.

- Some products with "vegetable" and "fruit" in their names or on their packaging are composed mainly of fat or sugar or are very high in salt.
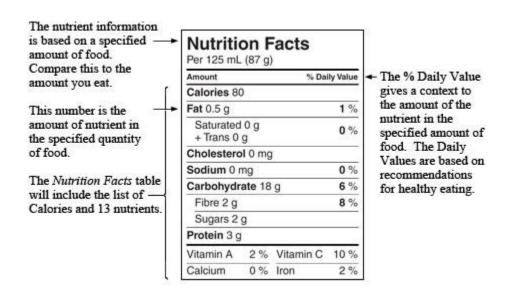
GRAIN PRODUCTS

- Eat a variety of whole grains such as barley, brown rice, oats, quinoa and wild rice.

- Look at the ingredient list rather than the color of a food to select whole grain foods. For example, brown bread may simply be white bread colored with molasses.

- Buy bread and cereals made from whole grains. The first ingredient listed should be whole wheat, whole oats, whole rye, whole grain corn, brown rice, barley, bulgur or oats.

- Choose whole wheat, multi-grain or pumpernickel varieties of bread, bagels, pita bread an tortillas.

MILK AND ALTERNATIVES

- Drink skim, 1% or 2% milk each day. Drink fortified soy beverages of you do not drink milk. Check the food label to see if your soy beverage is fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

- Choose yogurt with 2% milk fat (M.F.) or less. Some varieties are higher in calories and sugar. Check the food label.

- Look for reduced fat or lower fat cheeses. Lower fat cheeses generally have less than 20% milk fat (M.F.). You can also compare the Nutrition Facts tables to choose a lower fat cheese.

- Limit cream cheese, ice cream, coffee cream, whipping cream, and sour cream. These foods are high in fat and calories.

MEAT AND ALTERNATIVES

- Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often.

- Meat alternatives are an inexpensive source of protein and are high in fiber and low in fat.

- Use dry roasted nuts and seeds without added oils or salt.

- Eat at least two Food Guide servings of fish each week.

- Choose fish such as char, herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines and trout. These types of fish are particularly high in omega 3 fatty acids which have been found to have heart health benefits.

- Look for lean meats including, beef, pork, veal and lamb.

- Processed luncheon meats, sausages and prepackaged meats are usually high in fat and sodium.

The nutrient information is based on a specified amount of food. Compare this to the amount you eat.

This number is the amount of nutrient in the specified quantity of food.

The *Nutrition Facts* table will include the list of Calories and 13 nutrients.

Nutrition Facts
Per 125 mL (87 g)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 80	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate 18 g	6 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %
Sugars 2 g	
Protein 3 g	

Vitamin A	2 %	Vitamin C	10 %
Calcium	0 %	Iron	2 %

The % Daily Value gives a context to the amount of the nutrient in the specified amount of food. The Daily Values are based on recommendations for healthy eating.

PHOTO EXAMPLES OF NUTRITION FACT TABLES

Vegetable Juice

Nutrition Facts
Per 1 cup (250 mL)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 50	
Fat 0 g	0 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 680 mg	28 %
Carbohydrate 10 g	3 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %
Sugars 6 g	
Protein 2 g	
Vitamin A 2 %	Vitamin C 100 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 4 %

Low Sodium Vegetable Juice

Nutrition Facts
Per 1 cup (250 mL)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 50	
Fat 0 g	0 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 120 mg	5 %
Carbohydrate 11 g	4 %
Fibre 3 g	12 %
Sugars 8 g	
Protein 2 g	
Vitamin A 15 %	Vitamin C 100 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 4 %

Grain Product 1

Nutrition Facts
Per 1 1/4 cup (30 g)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 110	
Fat 0 g	0 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 240 mg	10 %
Carbohydrate 26 g	9 %
Fibre 1 g	4 %
Sugars 2 g	
Protein 2 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 30 %

Grain Product 2

Nutrition Facts
Per 3/4 cup (30 g)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 110	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated 0 g + Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 190 mg	8 %
Carbohydrate 24 g	8 %
Fibre 5 g	20 %
Sugars 3 g	
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 30 %

Part Skim Cheese

Nutrition Facts
Per 1 slice (33 g)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 95	
Fat 6 g	9 %
Saturated 4 g + Trans 0.2 g	21 %
Cholesterol 15 mg	
Sodium 210 mg	9 %
Carbohydrate 0 g	0 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 0 g	
Protein 11 g	

Vitamin A 6 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 25 %	Iron 0 %

Cheese

Nutrition Facts
Per 1 slice (30 g)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 110	
Fat 9 g	14 %
Saturated 5 g + Trans 0.4 g	27 %
Cholesterol 25 mg	8 %
Sodium 240 mg	10 %
Carbohydrate 0 g	0 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 0 g	
Protein 7 g	

Vitamin A 6 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 20 %	Iron 0 %

Beef Burger

Nutrition Facts
Per burger (85 g)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 210	
Fat 18 g	28 %
Saturated 7 g + Trans 0.5 g	38 %
Cholesterol 55 mg	
Sodium 330 mg	14 %
Carbohydrate 1 g	1 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 0 g	
Protein 12 g	

Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 10 %

Lean Beef Burger

Nutrition Facts
Per burger (85 g)

Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 123	
Fat 7 g	17 %
Saturated 3 g + Trans 0.5 g	17 %
Cholesterol 33 mg	
Sodium 200 mg	8 %
Carbohydrate 1 g	1 %
Fibre 0 g	0 %
Sugars 0 g	
Protein 14 g	

Vitamin A 0 %	Vitamin C 0 %
Calcium 2 %	Iron 12 %