

## Correctly Reading Food Labels

It is a common practice amongst American grocery shoppers to see an item in the store, and simply toss it into the cart without second-guessing the item's nutritional value. Actually, only 10-15% of people from all demographics, "always" read food labels. Now, some people do not want to spend the added time in the grocery store reading into the subjects of carbs, fats and proteins, but most shoppers have not learned the importance of what these values can teach us about our food. That is why we will be learning the "ins" and "outs" of food labels today, and how these amounts and percentages can change the way we shop.

**Source**: Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. "Labeling & Nutrition - How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label." U S Food and Drug Administration Home Page, Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research,

www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition/ucm274593.htm#see5.

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- The Serving Size is where your food label journey begins.
   This tells you how many, and what size, the servings are for your food product. As you can see, the product contains 2 servings (1 cup per serving). So if you were to consume 2 cups worth, you would have to double all the values listed in the nutrients, calories, and the % DV (Daily Value) sections.
- 2) <u>Calories (and Calories from Fat)</u> is your second stop. Calories are important in determining how much energy you are taking in with each serving, and an excessive intake of these can lead to weight gain. Now, as mentioned above, these are calories "per serving," so if you have 2 servings, you must double the calories along with the other areas (nutrients & %DV) mentioned.

## **General Guide to Calories**

- •40 Calories is low
- •100 Calories is moderate
- •400 Calories or more is high
- 3) <u>Limit These Nutrients</u>: Fat (Saturated & Trans) and Sodium are usually consumed in excess through processed foods. High levels of these in the diet can be correlated with an increased risk of heart disease, cancer, and obesity. Try and keep these levels as low as possible, but do not eliminate, as they are still needed for normal bodily functions.
- Get Enough of These: Fiber & specific micronutrients (Vit. A, C, Calcium, & Iron) are great for regularity and disease prevention. A diet high in fruits and vegetables should ensure an adequate amount of these.
- 5) The Footnote is not based on the product, but based on the Daily Values for a 2,000 calorie diet. It informs the buyer of what they should be looking to consume from the areas circled in yellow. So if you consume 1 serving of this product (= 12 g's of fat) you would have consumed 18% of your recommended fat intake for that day (12 g's of fat / 65 g's of daily fat intake = 18%)
- 6) <u>% Daily Values</u> are based on public health experts' advice to guide consumption levels and it is how we came to the 18% mentioned above. They are based off a 2,000 calorie diet that is used to equate percentages for each serving. If you have consumed 18% (12 g's) of your fat with this meal, you could hypothetically consume an additional 82% (53 g's) throughout the rest of your day to reach 100%.

