Grocery Shopping the Healthy Way

To be a heart healthy shopper you need to plan ahead, be in control and read labels. The following tips and lists will help you become a heart healthy shopper.

Plan ahead

- Plan a menu for the week. Use heart healthy cookbooks for new ideas.
- Make a grocery list. Group your food items according to the layout of your grocery store for easier shopping.
- Eat a healthy snack before you shop. Being hungry may tempt you to buy more than you need.
- Check for weekly grocery specials to help cut costs.

Be in control

- Shop along the outer edges of the store first. Here, you will find the four food groups: grain products, vegetables and fruits, milk products and meat and alternatives.
- Some packaged goods in the center aisles and displays at the end of aisles are high in fat and salt. Read labels and choose carefully.
- Skip the snack food aisle if it is too tempting.
- Check with your local supermarket for grocery tours. The dietitians leading these tours can help you choose the right foods to fill your shopping cart.

Read labels

- Look for breads, cereals and grains with at least 2 g of fiber per serving.
- Look for low fat crackers, processed meats and prepared foods with less than 3 g of fat per serving. 5 g of fat = 1 tsp (5 mL) = 45 calories.
- Canned soups, sauces, vegetables and processed meats and foods are usually high in salt. 1 tsp (5 mL) of table salt = 2300 mg of sodium.
- Look at the ingredient list. If one of the first three ingredients is salt, sugar, oil or fat, try choosing a different food or use that food in small amounts.

Shopping cart guide

Use this simple shopping cart guide to help you be a heart smart shopper. Split your cart up into three parts:

Heart smart shopping list

Here are some examples of foods that will help you meet Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and lower the fat in your diet. Your shopping list will be based on the foods you and your family enjoy eating, your food budget, and your heart healthy eating guidelines.

Grain Products

Look for products with less than 3g of fat and more than 2g of fiber per serving.

Bakery

- stoneground, whole wheat, rye and flax bread
- multigrain breads, bagels

- whole wheat English muffin
- whole wheat pita bread and soft tortillas
- multigrain plain bread sticks
- angel food cake

Cereals

- hot cereals such as rolled oats and oat bran, Red River® and Sunny Boy®
- instant oatmeal
- high fiber cold cereals like shredded wheat, toasted oat ring cereal, low fat muesli, All Bran Buds® or Corn Bran®

Cookies

- apple, date or fig newtons
- ginger snaps
- graham or chocolate wafers

Crackers

- unsalted soda crackers
- Stoned Wheat Thins®
- melba toast
- crisp bread
- rusks
- potato crisps
- rice cakes
- popcorn cakes
- matzo crackers

Dry goods

- converted, brown, basmati or wild rice
- pasta – try the high fiber varieties
- barley, bulgur, wheat germ and bran

Snack foods

- popcorn – air popped or microwave light
- baked potato chips
- pretzels
- rice cakes

Vegetables and Fruit

- vegetables and fruits that are deep, bright colors such as orange, red, yellow and green
- frozen vegetables and fruit
- dark green leafy vegetables such as romaine lettuce and spinach
- fruit canned in its own juice or pear juice
- canned tomatoes or tomato sauce
- dried fruit
- juice sicles

Tips:

- Use vegetables and fruits that are in season
- Choose a variety of vegetables and fruits to help achieve a target of 5 servings per day

Milk Products

Milk
- milk – skim or 1% milk fat (MF)

Cheese
- cottage cheese – 1% MF fat or less
- block cheese – 15% MF or less

Desserts
- yogurts – 1% MF fat or less
- frozen yogurt, sherbet, ice milk or light ice cream
- pudding made with 1% or skim milk

Meat and Alternatives

A serving is about 100g or the size of a deck of cards. Buy only what you need.
- lean or extra lean ground beef
- lean ground turkey or chicken meat
- lean cuts of beef or pork e.g. round or loin
- turkey or chicken breast
- fresh or frozen fish (not battered or breaded)
- canned fish packed in water
- tofu, textured soy protein found in meat substitutes
- soy products

At the Deli counter
- lean or fat free roast meats
- ham and pastrami

Tip: Use leftover roasted meat and poultry for your sandwich meat instead of high fat deli meats

Eggs
- eggs (no more than 2 egg yolks per week)
- commercial egg substitutes

Dry goods
- dried or canned beans (remember to drain and rinse canned beans), split peas, lentils and soybeans.
- unsalted (old fashioned or natural) peanut butter
- unsalted nuts and seeds

Other Foods

Desserts
- Jello®
- Popsicles®
- Jam, jelly

Fats
- Canola oil
- Olive oil
- Nuts / peanut butter. Nuts are cholesterol free but still high in total fat content. Small amounts of plain nuts are healthy additions to your meal plan. A serving of peanut butter is 1Tbsp (15mL).

Tips:
- Use cooking sprays or put oil in your own spray bottle

o Try low fat or fat-free spreads and salad dressings

How to choose health friendly margarine

- Some tub style margarines are hydrogenated to make the vegetable oil into a solid form. Hydrogenation causes trans fatty acids to be formed.
- Trans fatty acids act like saturated fats. "They increase your blood cholesterol levels".
- The best choices of margarines are the soft tub style margarines that state "non-hydrogenated" on the label. Look at the list of ingredients. The first ingredient should be listed as "liquid oil" and not "hydrogenated oil".
- Avoid hard block margarines, shortening, lard and butter. They are high in hydrogenated oil and saturated fat.

Helpful ice cream buying tips

- The nutrition information is available on the side of packaged items. At fast food locations, you can ask for the nutrition information on the products.
- Frozen desserts have high amounts of sugar. They can be low in fat but they may still be high in calories.
- Most of the fat in frozen dessert products is saturated fat. This type of fat can increase blood cholesterol levels.
- The amounts of fat changes with the flavor of ice cream, frozen yogurt or sherbet. When no flavor is given, it is based on vanilla and a 1 cup (250mL) serving size.
- As a rule of thumb, for every 100 calories in the food item, there should be 3 grams of fat or less.
- A 1 cup (250mL) serving size of frozen desserts is roughly the size of a tennis ball. A baseball is about the size of 1½ servings. If you need to lose weight choose smaller serving sizes.

Choosing or using cookbooks

- Buy Canadian cookbooks. Books from other countries often have ingredients that are not available here, this is especially true for low fat ones.
- Buy cookbooks that suit your family's eating patterns. If your family doesn't like pasta then don't buy a low fat pasta cookbook.
- Try before you buy. Your public library is an excellent resource for cookbooks. Have a look at their selection to see if you really will use that cookbook.
- You may not need a cookbook. You can still use many of your favorite recipes and change some of the high fat ingredients.
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- Grocery Store Tours

Charlene will take you to the supermarket of your choice for a tour. Learn how to read the nutrition labels, to avoid marketing traps, to improve nutrient quality and add some variety to your diet. Attention is given to your resources. Here are a few of the things you'll walk away with:

~How to make healthier choices
~Meal planning ideas, including quick and easy options
~Grocery shopping tips
~How to stock your pantry

~Food safety guidelines
~How to read nutrition labels

Savvy Supermarket Shopping Skills

With more than 30,000 different foods in a typical supermarket, selecting foods that fit a low-fat eating plan can seem overwhelming. Try these tips to keep your cart on the low-fat track.

Focus on the pyramid. Let the Food Guide Pyramid guide you to a healthful diet. Load your cart with breads, cereals, rice, pasta, fruits and vegetables. Include smaller amounts of lean meats, poultry, fish, beans and low-fat dairy products. Go easy on fats, oils and sweets. See the chart below for more information.

Read the label. The Nutrition Facts food label tells you how much fat, cholesterol, sodium, fiber, vitamins and minerals are in the foods you buy. Look for nutrition information for fruits, vegetables, meats, poultry and seafood on Nutri-Facts posters or brochures in many supermarkets.

Try new versions of old favorites. An abundance of reduced-fat and fat-free goodies such as cakes, cookies and ice cream are now available. These foods can help you reduce fat while enjoying a treat. But remember, fat-reduced items aren't necessarily low in calories, so keep serving sizes sensible and read the label.

Look at your list. Review your grocery shopping list. Can you replace some items with lower-fat choices? Modify or substitute where possible.

Keep it convenient. Save time and stick with a healthful eating plan. Pick up convenience foods like prewashed and chopped lettuce and vegetables, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables, and low-fat frozen entrees.

Scale the Food Guide Pyramid the low-fat way
Food group Low fat choices
Bread, Cereal, Rice and Pasta Group To boost fiber intake, choose breads that list "whole grain" or "whole wheat" first. Look for those with at least three grams of fiber per serving.

Choose whole grain pastas and serve with tomato-based marinara sauces instead of cream or butter sauces.

Choose brown rice instead of white rice. Brown rice has nearly three times as much fiber as white rice, and more B vitamins, too.

When selecting hot or cold cereals, look for varieties with three grams of fiber or more and three grams of fat or less per serving.

Fruit Group and Vegetable Group Aim for at least six servings of vegetables and hour servings of fruit per day. Fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables are the best choices, dried fruits count toward your goal.

If time is an issue, buy prewashed and pre-cut vegetables, like lettuce and spinach salads, baby carrots, broccoli and cauliflower. Zip through the supermarket salad bar to pick up a variety of vegetables for stir fries, salads, soups and entrees.

Buy fruits and vegetables in season to save money. They're also at their peak for flavor and nutrition at this time.
Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group Opt for skim milk in place of 1%, 2% or whole milk.

Look for light, reduced-fat and low-fat cheeses to help keep calories and saturated fat in check.

Try lower-fat dairy products such as Neufchatel cheese and low-fat or non-fat yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese and frozen yogurt.
Meat, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs and Nuts Group For the leanest meats, choose cuts with the words "loin" or "round" in their names (such as top round beef or loin pork chops). Choose ground beef marked extra lean. Organic and grass fed meats are the best meat choices.

Chicken and turkey are lean choices when you remove the skin before eating (it's okay to remove it after cooking).

Fish and seafood are generally low in fat. Try haddock, scallops, red snapper and flounder. Choose water-packed tuna and plain or low-fat, breaded, frozen fillets. Make sure your fish choices are ocean raised, not farm-raised.

Dry or canned legumes --- beans and peas --- are good sources of protein and fiber. And, they're practically fat-free.

Eggs are an excellent source of protein and are fairly low in fat. However, egg yolks are high in cholesterol, so limit yolks to four per week.

Fats, Oils and Sweets Use fats and oils sparingly. Choose extra virgin olive oils (not for cooking) and extra virgin coconut oil (best for cooking). Butter is also an acceptable choice cooking. Remember, we do not need a lot of fats and oils in our diet so keep intake to a minimum.

Omega-3 salad dressings, such as an Oil and Vinegar dressing; and Omega-3 mayonnaise provide a healthier fat.

Sweets should be kept at a minimum. Although reduced-fat and fat-free cookies, cakes and pies can help you trim fat, they still contain calories. Choose these treats only occasionally.

Diet and Heart Disease

Fiber Fact Sheet

Increasing your dietary fiber intake has become synonymous these days with good health. This new image of grandma's old demand for eating your roughage remains a cornerstone of good nutrition. A diet high in fiber has been associated with prevention of most major diseases, including gastrointestinal disorders, cancer, obesity and heart disease. While the concept hasn't changed, the possibilities of making a diet high in fiber exciting and delicious, have. High fiber should be synonymous not only with good health, but also with good taste.

What is dietary fiber?

Mention fiber and most of us think of breakfast cereals. A multitude of new high fiber cereals have been surfacing on our grocery shelves. Americans seem to depend on their daily bowl of breakfast bran to triumphantly assure themselves that they've eaten a day's worth of the good stuff. Not so! While bran cereals do provide a significant amount of fiber, they fall far short of providing the daily need in both variety and amount of fiber.

By definition, fiber is the part of the plant that our bodies cannot absorb or digest. There are two basic classifications of fiber: the water-soluble types and the insoluble varieties. Both are significant in a variety of ways. There is no magic fiber. All types are good. Many foods such as vegetables are a combination of two types of fiber.

Water-soluble fiber: The forerunner against heart disease
This group commonly includes pectin and gums. Pectins are typically found in fruits like apples and oranges. These fibers help other nutrients to be absorbed into the bloodstream. Gums are found in fruits, vegetables and oats. These affect the absorption of cholesterol and glucose in the blood.

Insoluble fibers
These include cellulose, hemicellulose and lignin. Both cellulose and hemicellulose are important to human digestion. These fibers are found in whole grains and vegetables. They add bulk along the digestive tract and move waste out of the body more effectively.

How will a high fiber diet help prevent heart disease?

While all fibers are beneficial, those linked with heart disease are primarily water-soluble fibers. Major studies conducted throughout the U.S. have demonstrated water-soluble

fiber's effect on lowering cholesterol. Foods rich in these gummy fibers include oat bran, legumes (dried beans), barley, psyllium, guar gum and pectin from many fruits.

How much fiber is enough?
The typical American diet contains about 10-15 grams of dietary fiber or about one-half the recommended level of 25-35 grams.

What foods are high in fiber?

Fiber comes most generally from plant foods. Although meat may be fibrous, it is not a significant source of dietary fiber. Neither are dairy products.

High fiber foods are not always course in texture. For example, celery is often thought of as being high in fiber, when in fact, peas and beans have four times the amount of dietary fiber. Generally, the less highly processed the grain, fruit or vegetables, the more fiber they contain.

Fresh, raw vegetables are your best bet. Juices offer little, if any fiber, and peeled, mushy fruits and vegetables are greatly compromised. Unrefined whole grains are also a plus for high fiber diets. Look on the label for 100 percent whole wheat as the first ingredient in your breads.

What steps can I take to increase my fiber intake?

When was the last time you made a drastic change in your daily routine or habits? Did it work? Probably not! Any major or drastic changes in our lifestyles are generally not recommended and are met with resistance, side effects and other difficulties.

Drastically changing from a low fiber diet to a high fiber diet may result in problems such as diarrhea or bloating. Your approach should be one of gradually introducing or substituting high fiber foods for low fiber, fatty foods.

Here are some easy ways to increase the fiber in your diet:
- Choose a side salad instead of fries with your luncheon sandwich.
- Consider alternatives for routine meals eaten out. Frequent those restaurants with healthier choices such as vegetable side dishes, whole grain breads, fruits and salads. Fast food should not be synonymous with high fat and low fiber.
- Experiment with different meal combinations. Try recipes which complement small servings of meat with vegetables and fruit.
- Keep a jar of oat bran handy. Sprinkle it over salad, soup, breakfast cereals and yogurt. Add oat bran to meats, salads and soups. Combine oat bran with cinnamon and sprinkle it over toast.
- Eat the peel. It's easier than struggling to peel it or eating around it.
- Include a fresh fruit in your diet every day.

Can I get too much fiber?

Probably not. Extremely high fiber diets have been associated with specific mineral deficiencies. Most notably, zinc and calcium requirements may be slightly higher on a high fiber diet. These deficiencies, however, are uncommon to most all our diets. We seem to have a remarkable ability to adapt to a high fiber diet.

Take the fiber challenge

Choose from your favorite foods to provide at least 25 grams of dietary fiber. Look at these high fiber sources below: (values shown per 100 grams)

| High Fiber Foods (per 100 grams) | Total Fiber (grams) | Water-Soluble Fiber (grams) |
|---|---|---|
| Oat Bran | 27.8 | 14.0 |
| Rolled Oats | 13.9 | 7.7 |
| Cornflakes | 12.2 | 7.2 |
| Grapenuts | 13.0 | 5.6 |
| Pinto, Kidney & Lima Beans | 8.7 ~ 10.1 | 5.6 |
| Corn | 3.3 | 1.8 |
| Apple | 2.0 | 0.9 |
| Orange | 2.0 | 0.6 |
| Banana | 1.8 | 0.8 |

Grocery stores are packed with aisle after aisle of different types and brands of foods. The food label can help you to make sense of how to choose foods that fit into the TLC Diet. Here are some tips on how to use the food label to choose foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
Here are some tips that will help you to stick to your low saturated fat, low cholesterol diet (TLC Diet):

Free. This claim means that a food contains no amount (or a very small amount) of the these nutrients: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugar, and calories.

- "Calorie-free" means fewer than 5 calories per serving.
- "Fat-free" means less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving.

Low. This claim can be used on all foods that can be eaten often without going over the limit for one or more of these nutrients: saturated fat, cholesterol, fat, sodium, and calories.

- "Low-saturated fat": 1 gram or less per serving.
- "Low-fat": 3 grams or less per serving.
- "Low-cholesterol": 20 milligrams or less and 2 grams or less saturated fat per serving.
- "Low-sodium": 140 milligrams or less per serving.
- "Low calorie": 40 calories or less per serving.

Other words that mean "low," include: "little," "few," and "low source of."

Lean and extra lean. These claims can be used to describe the saturated fat and fat content of meat, poultry, seafood and game meats.

- "Lean": less than 10 grams of fat and 4.5 grams or less of saturated fat, and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.
- "Extra lean": less than 5 grams of fat, less than 2 grams saturated fat, and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol per serving.

Watching your serving size is still important. Just because something is "reduced fat" or "lighter" in calories, does not mean that you can eat more of it. Choosing foods lower in saturated fat and cholesterol will help you to lower your blood cholesterol. By eating a larger portion of a food low in saturated fat, you may eat more or just as much saturated fat and fat as the regular variety.

READING FOOD LABELS

GENERAL INFORMATION:

What is a food label?

- Food packages and containers in the United States give shoppers information about the nutritional value of the food in the package. This nutrition information is given to help you make healthier food choices while shopping for food. Some foods do not have nutrition information on them. Some of these foods include bakery food items, produce (fruits and vegetables), fresh meat and foods made by small businesses.
- The nutrition information is found in the "Nutrition Facts" label. It is found on the side or back of most packaged foods. This label tells you what a serving size is and how many servings are in the package. Other information shown includes the amount of calories, fat, carbohydrate, protein, vitamins and minerals found in the food. Begin reading food labels at the top, with the serving size and number of servings in the package.

How do I read and understand information on the "Nutrition Facts" label? Serving Size Information:

- Serving Size: The serving size is usually listed in cups or pieces and sometimes includes a weight (grams, ounces). It is important to remember that "serving size" means the cooked, ready-to-eat part of the food. Compare the amount that you will eat to the given serving size. Remember that double the serving size means double the calories and other amounts listed on the label.
- Servings per Container: This tells you how many servings are in the package of food in the serving size described above.

Amount per Serving:

- Calories: The total calories in one serving of the food are listed here. Eating too many calories each day may cause a person to become overweight. Talk to your dietitian (deye-e-TISH-an), nutritionist (noo-TRI-shun-ist) or caregiver about the amount of calories that you should eat each day.
- Calories from Fat: The number of calories that come from fat in one serving are listed here. You can use this number to figure out how much fat is in the food. For example, a food may have 100 total calories in one serving and 50 calories from fat. By dividing 100 by 50, you know that this food has 50 percent (or one half) of total calories from fat.

Nutrients and their amounts listed on the "Nutrition Facts Label":

- Reading labels may help you get enough of the nutrients you need each day to be healthy. Reading labels may also help you to eat less of the nutrients that could cause health problems. Eating too much fat, saturated (SACH-er-ay-ted) fat, trans fat, cholesterol (koh-LES-ter-ol) and sodium may increase your risk for certain health problems. Some of these health problems are heart disease and high blood pressure.

o Percent Daily Value: The percent daily value or "percent DV" is on the right side of the "Nutrition Facts" label. It tells you how much of your daily needs are met by one serving of this food for each nutrient listed. This number is based on a diet of 2000 calories. Your calorie needs may be more or less than 2000 calories. Ask your dietitian, nutritionist or caregiver what your daily calorie needs should be.

 You can use the percent daily values number to figure out if a food is high or low in a nutrient. A food is low in a nutrient if it provides less than five percent of the nutrient. A food is high in a nutrient if it provides more than twenty percent of the nutrient.

o Total Fat: This is the total amount of fat that is found in one serving. This amount is listed in grams (g). High fat foods may lead to weight gain. This is because each gram of fat has more than twice the calories of carbohydrate and protein.

o Saturated Fat: The amount of saturated fat in one serving is listed in grams. Saturated fat is one part of the total fat in a food. Saturated fat raises blood cholesterol more than other types of fat. Most people should limit their intake of saturated fat to less than 10 percent of total calories per day. For example, a person who needs 2000 calories per day should eat less than 200 calories from saturated fat.

o Trans Fat: The amount of trans fat in one serving is listed in grams. Most people should limit this type of fat as much as possible because it also raises blood cholesterol.

o Cholesterol: The amount of cholesterol in one serving is listed in milligrams (mg). The amount of cholesterol you eat and drink each day should be less than 300 mg. This amount is the same for most people.

o Sodium: The amount of sodium in one serving is listed in milligrams (mg). The amount of sodium you should eat and drink each day should be less than 2400 mg. Most of the sodium people get in their diet comes from salt.

o Total Carbohydrate: The amount of carbohydrates in one serving is listed in grams. People with diabetes (deye-ah-BEE-teez) need to control the total amount of carbohydrates they eat. This helps to keep their glucose (blood sugar) from going too high or too low.

o Dietary Fiber: The amount of dietary fiber in one serving is listed in grams. Fiber is one kind of carbohydrate. The amount of fiber listed on the label is part of the total carbohydrates found in the food. Most people do not eat enough fiber each day. Most adults need about 25 g of dietary fiber each day.

o Sugars: The amount of sugar in one serving is listed in grams. Sugars are another type of carbohydrate in food. The amount of sugar listed on the label is part of the total carbohydrates found in the food. Sugar includes the naturally sweet part of fruit and other foods as well as added sweeteners. Most people should limit foods high in sugar.

o Protein: The amount of protein in one serving is listed in grams.

o Vitamins and Minerals: The food label lists vitamins A and C, calcium and iron. Most people do not get enough of these nutrients each day. There are no amounts listed next to them on the food label. Instead, the percentage of these nutrients that the food provides as part of your daily needs is listed. For example, a food label on milk may list 30 percent next to calcium. This shows that one serving of milk will give you about 30 percent of the calcium that you need for one day.
o Daily needs for fat, carbohydrate and protein: Most people should limit their intake of fat to about one-third of total daily calories each day, or less. Most people need about one-half of total daily calories from carbohydrates, or more. The amount of protein most people need is about 10 to 20 percent of total calories. Each person's needs may be slightly different. Ask your dietitian or caregiver about the amounts of these nutrients that are right for you.

Other information on the "Nutrition Facts" Label:

• Percent Daily Values Chart: Some food labels have a section that shows the amounts of some nutrients that should be eaten each day. These amounts are shown for a 2000 calorie diet and a 2500 calorie diet. This chart lists goals for total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, total carbohydrates, and dietary fiber.
• Calories per Gram: Many labels tell you how many calories are in each gram of the major parts of food. The major parts of food are fat, carbohydrate and protein. Fats contain nine calories per gram, carbohydrates contain four calories, and proteins contain four calories.
How do I read and understand information outside the "Nutrition Facts" Label?
• Ingredients: The single ingredients in each food are listed in order of their weight (amount) in the food. The list starts with the item that takes up the most weight. The list keeps going in order of weight, down to the smallest part of the food. Some people need to eat less of a certain nutrient. A food that lists this nutrient as the first, second or third ingredient would not be a good choice.
• Contains: Some companies list ingredients that often cause allergies (AL-er-jeez) (body reaction) such as wheat, dairy, eggs, soy, and nuts. This helps people avoid food items that may cause problems for them.
• Nutrient Content Claims: Food labels may have words or statements that say something about the nutritional value (amount of nutrients) of the food. These statements have the same meanings for all foods. These words may help you quickly find foods and liquids low in cholesterol, fat, sodium, and sugar. The following are some of these statements, along with their meaning:
o Calories:
 "Calorie free": Less than five calories per serving.
 "Low calorie": Forty calories or less per serving.
 "Reduced" or "less" calories: At least 25 percent fewer calories per serving when compared to a similar food.
 "Light" or "Lite": One-third fewer calories, or 50 percent less fat per serving.

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o Sugar:

- "Sugar free": Less than one-half gram of sugar per serving.
- "Reduced" or " less" sugar: At least 25 percent less sugar per serving, when compared with a similar food.

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o Fat:
- "Fat free": Less than one-half gram of fat per serving.
- "100 percent fat free": Less than one-half gram of fat per serving.
- "Low fat": Three grams or less per serving.
- "Reduced" or "less" fat: At least 25 percent less fat, when compared to a similar food.

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o Cholesterol:
- "Cholesterol free": Less than two mg of cholesterol per serving.
- "Low cholesterol": Twenty (20) mg or less of cholesterol per serving.
- "Reduced" or "less" cholesterol: At least 25 percent less cholesterol per serving.

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o Saturated fat:
- "Saturated Fat Free": Less than one-half gram of saturated fat per serving.
- "Low Saturated Fat": One gram or less per serving or not more than 15 percent of calories from saturated fat.
- "Reduced" or "less" saturated fat: At least 25 percent less saturated fat per serving.

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o Sodium:
- "Sodium free": Less than five mg of sodium per serving.
- "Low sodium": One-hundred forty (140) mg or less per serving.
- "Very low sodium": Thirty-five (35) mg or less per serving.
- "Reduced" or "less" sodium: At least 25 percent less sodium per serving.

• Health Claims: Food labels may have a message that tells how a food or part of a food affects a disease or a health condition. The United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved certain health claims that can be made on foods. It is important to read food labels very carefully. Some foods may list health claims that have not been approved by the FDA. These food labels will usually list a statement telling you that the health claim has not been "evaluated" or "approved" by the FDA. The following are examples of food claims that have been approved by the FDA:
o Calcium decreases a person's risk of getting osteoporosis (os-tee-oh-poh-ROH-sis). (Osteoporosis is a condition where bones become brittle, and break more easily.)
o Grain products that contain fiber, fruits, and vegetables decrease a person's risk of getting cancer.
o Saturated fat and cholesterol increases a person's risk of getting heart disease.
Making Sense Out of Food Labels & Making Healthy Choices

by Russell J. Martino, Ph.D.

Food effects your health in many different ways.
Heart health, blood pressure, bone density, immune system strength, liver and kidney function, muscle and joint soreness, nervousness, irritability, and your ability to concentrate are just a few of the things powerfully effected by food choices.
You'd never knowingly eat something guaranteed to harm your health, yet, every day you run the risk of doing exactly that!

In this Special Report you're going to learn the important things to look for on food labels and you will learn how to quickly determine if the food you are considering is healthy or harmful.

## UNDERSTANDING LABELS

To understand food labels you need to know what causes a healthy or unhealthy reaction in your body.

The following points are easy to understand, and once you get these basics, you'll be reading and understanding food labels like a pro.

### About Digestion

It takes energy and essential nutrients to digest food. Unless a food gives you more nutrients than you consume digesting it, eating the food leaves you in worse shape nutritionally than if you had eaten nothing at all.

Everything that crosses you lips is broken down into three macro-nutrients; protein, carbohydrate and fat. Each one serves a different purpose and causes different reactions in your body.

### About Hunger

What you feel as "hunger", is your brain sending you a message saying, "I need nutrition! I need vitamins and minerals", "I need some essential fats and protein, FEED ME so I can keep you healthy and keep you going!"

The only reason you "need" to eat is because your body needs protein, carbohydrate and fat to run on and it needs essential nutrients to keep you heart, liver, kidneys and everything else working properly.

If you stop eating you'll starve. And if you fail to get the essential nutrients your body needs to function properly, your organs and glands will not work efficiently and you'll eventually become ill.

Beware of "empty calorie" foods!

When you eat empty calorie foods you stay hungry no matter how many calories you consume.
Chase a hand full of cookies or a bag of chips and a candy bar with a soda water and your stomach may be full, but you'll be starved for nutrition and hungry again in no time.
Grocery store shelves are littered with bags, boxes, packages and cans of food that are high in calories, loaded with chemicals and woefully low in nutrition. Avoid them!

A nutritionist once said, "We dig our graves with our teeth." No doubt he was referring to the empty calorie, chemical rich, macro nutrient unbalanced, garbage-food that has become so popular.

- Empty calorie foods are a complete rip off.
- Empty calorie foods do not satisfy your appetite.
- Empty calorie foods do not give you the nutrients you need to be healthy.
- Empty calorie foods are like nutritional hot checks! Processing them uses up more nutrients than the food provides, leaving you with a nutritional deficit.
- Empty calorie foods are loaded with chemicals and preservatives that drag you down.
- Empty calorie foods usually contain the worst possible mix of macro nutrients. They are typically high in carbohydrates and typically low in protein, healthy fats and fiber.

Empty calorie foods include most snack food and fast food, all junk food, candy, white flour products, commercially processed foods and more. Click here for a printable chart

Beware of Chemicals & Preservatives

The FDA has awarded over 8000 chemicals, preservatives and food additives the coveted GRS designation. GRS stands for Generally Recognized as Safe.
Food processing chemicals are a multi-billion dollar a year industry.

Most food additives are chemicals.

I don't know about you, but chemicals that are "generally recognized as safe" will never be an intentional part of my diet!

Chemicals, additives, preservatives and dyes play no role in building health and vitality. In fact, they work against it.

Health experts warn against eating processed food because nitrates, nitrites, sulfates, sulfites, transfatty acids, chemicals and additives are bad for you and damage your health.

AVOID CHEMICAL STEW!

Most processed foods are loaded with processing chemicals. Not one of which will do you any good at all!

HERE IS A COMPLETE LABEL READING COURSE IN A SINGLE SENTENCE

If the food contains ingredients that have chemical sounding names you aren't sure how to pronounce, DON'T BUY IT!
Refusing to read labels so you can avoid chemical ingredients whenever possible is like picking up strangers in dark alleys and inviting them home, it could lead to disaster because you just don't know what you're dealing with.

UNDERSTANDING PROTEIN, CARBOHYDRATE & FAT

Whether it's pizza, steamed broccoli, a candy bar or a steak dinner, ALL FOOD is composed of protein, carbohydrate and fat in some amount and ratio.

Food labels tell you how much PROTEIN, CARBOHYDRATE and FAT is contained IN A SINGLE SERVING, but for that information to be meaningful, you have to know what protein, carbohydrate and fat do in your body and how these macro nutrients effect your health.

Let's take a closer look at protein.

Protein is made of amino acids and amino acids are the raw material building blocks your body needs to build muscle and make thousands of different protein combinations that keep your immune system strong and keep you healthy.

Without adequate protein your body will become soft and weak and you will not have the amino acids you need for a strong immune system or proper organ function.

There's been hot debate for years over how much protein is the right amount, but there is one thing everyone agrees on; protein is essential and without it you will eventually become weak and ill. Most people get too little protein in their diet, not too much.

As far as food labels go, protein content is not the most important thing to be concerned with.  Generally speaking, the higher the protein content the better.

Realistically, unless you are going out of your way to consume a high protein diet, it's unlikely you will ever over consume protein.
FATS - THE GOOD, THE BAD & THE UGLY

There's a lot of confusion and misunderstanding about the role fat plays in human health. Certain fats are extremely good for you and others are extremely bad. Here's what you need to know to make healthy choices.

Good fats include the essential fatty acids the omega 3's and 6's. You get these essential fats in cold water fish, seeds and nuts, (flax seeds and walnuts are especially rich in omega 3) and certain fresh vegetables and whole grains.

Today it's difficult to get all the healthy essential fatty acids you need through diet alone. Personally, I supplement my diet daily with a plant source, balanced EFAs.

Mono saturated fat, from sources such as olive oil, nuts, avocados, and more, is extremely good for you.

Numerous studies have shown that a diet rich in mono saturated fat lowers cholesterol, lowers triglycerides and has a favorable effect on blood pressure.

Polyunsaturated fat: Before chemical processing, polyunsaturated fat is generally a healthy fat, consisting primarily of the essential fatty acid Omega 6.
Polyunsaturated fat comes from certain plants, seeds and vegetables.

Safflower oil, sunflower oil and corn oil are common sources of polyunsaturated fat.

Unfortunately today, the polyunsaturated fat you are likely to encounter in processed foods has been hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated in order to give the oil "shelf life". Hydrogenated oils is harmful to your health and should be avoided.
What about inflammation and fat?
Besides being chemically distorted there's another problem with polyunsaturated fats. Polyunsaturated fat consists entirely of Omega 6 essential fatty acids. And most people get way too much Omega 6 in their diet.

Omega 6 essential fatty acids regulate inflammation in your body. Too much Omega 6 in your diet means you will be more prone to experiencing inflammation and the associated pain.

Omega 3 essential fatty acids regulate the anti-inflammatory response in your body. Most people get way too little Omega 3 in their diet.

Too much Omega 6 and not enough Omega 3 is a perfect prescription for inflammation and pain that you would never experience if proper balance were maintained.

Saturated Fat: Saturated fat is an essential component of cell structure and is contained in every cell in your body.
Most saturated fats are easily burned for energy, in fact, only one type of saturated fat, (long carbon chain fat), is stored in the body. There's no benefit in over consuming saturated fat, but saturated fat is essential to good health and getting some, as it occurs naturally in eggs, meat, and dairy is quite good for you.

The biggest health concern with most saturated fat is that poultry, beef, and dairy cows are routinely injected with hormones, steroids and antibiotics and these substances tend to accumulate in the fat. For this reason it is important to select the leaner cuts of beef, trim away all visible fat, and never eat chicken skin. When ever possible select beef or poultry that contains no hormones, no steroids, and no antibiotics. A little saturated fat is good for you, but too much is too much!

There are 3 types of saturated fat, short-chain, medium-chain, and long-chain saturated fats. Short chain and long chain saturated fats are burned for energy, the body does not store them. Long chain saturated fat does not dissolve at body temperature. If you get too much, this sticky fat can build up in your blood and increase your risk of high blood pressure and heart disease. As far as label reading goes, if the polyunsaturated fat content is high, the food probably contains hydrogenated oil and should be avoid. If the fat is mono-saturated then it is healthy. If the source of fat is saturated fat it is probably just fine, but even so, be careful not to over consume. Remember, a little is good for you, but too much is too much.

SOME FATS ARE DANGEROUS

The fats that are primarily responsible for CAUSING HEART DISEASE and other serious illness do not come from animals.
The fats that threaten your health the most are man made. I am referring to the hydrogenated and partially hydrogenated oils, which never occur in nature.

Hydrogenated oils contain abundant amounts of transfatty acids and transfatty acids cause arterial damage, heart disease, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, elevated triglycerides, certain forms of cancer and more.

In a study recently published in The Journal of The American Medical Association, Dr. Walter Willet, head of the Harvard School of Public Health estimated that at least 100,000 people in the U.S. die each year as a direct result of heart disease CAUSED BY consuming foods containing hydrogenated oils and transfatty acids over a period of many years. Unless you READ THE INGREDIENTS you won't know if the product contains health destroying hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils.

If hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil is listed in the ingredients, just leave it alone because the unhealthy fats are so bad for you that nothing else in the product could possibly justify eating the food.

Remember that if you sprinkle vitamins into a glass of poison, you still have a glass of poison AND if you load up otherwise healthy food with hydrogenated oils and food preservatives, the otherwise healthy food is no longer healthy, is it?

Hydrogenated oil is a common ingredient in margarine, commercial salad dressings, baked goods, candy, fast foods, processed foods and more.

Start reading labels and you'll be very surprised at how many foods contain these health destroying oils that should be abolished from our food supply.

What about cholesterol?

The role of cholesterol in human health is extremely misunderstood.

Any basic microbiology textbook clearly explains that cholesterol synthesis in the body is controlled by the action of the hormone insulin and that the consumption of dietary cholesterol has little effect on blood serum cholesterol levels.

Eating food that contains cholesterol has only a tiny effect on total blood cholesterol levels. Eating foods that are high in insulin stimulating sugar and carbohydrates will drive your cholesterol and triglycerides higher and higher and keep them elevated.

If you're concerned about cholesterol, triglycerides and heart health, read this article on cholesterol, choose foods that are high in protein and don't worry about naturally occurring fat and the little bit of dietary cholesterol they may contain.

As far as labels are concerned, in my opinion, the amount of cholesterol a food contains is of little importance compared to other information revealed on the label.

What About Carbohydrates?

(carbohydrates = sugar) and (sugar = carbohydrate)

Carbohydrates ARE sugar. Eating foods high in carbohydrates produces exactly the same result as eating sugar straight out of the sugar bowl, because carbohydrates and sugar are exactly the same.

A carbohydrate molecule is made up entirely of a group of sugar molecules linked together like links on a car chain. A carbohydrate molecule is a "sugar-chain".

When you digest a carbohydrate, the links in the "sugar chain" are broken and each individual sugar molecule is turned into the sugar glucose. The glucose enters your blood stream and causes your "blood sugar" to rise rapidly.

Rapidly rising blood sugar gives you a quick burst of energy, some people call it a "sugar high".

Have you ever seen kids eat candy and start bouncing off the wall like nuclear powered pinballs?

Give a kid a breakfast high in carbohydrates, (like cereal and milk or waffles or pancakes), and by the time they get to school, they'll have so much "sugar energy", they couldn't sit still if their life depended on it. Poor teacher!
A meal high in carbohydrates will cause your blood sugar to rise rapidly, which causes your pancreas to release the hormone insulin. Insulin lowers blood sugar.

Minutes after you consume a high carbohydrate meal, your insulin level goes up 15 to 25 times higher than normal and stays elevated for 3 to 5 hours. The way insulin lowers blood sugar is by converting the sugar in your blood into fat and then storing the fat in your fat cells. The entire process is explained in detail in 5 Steps to Optimal Health.

Eating in a way that keeps insulin levels elevated throughout the day eventually leads to a condition known as insulin resistance. Insulin resistance dramatically increases the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, kidney disease and more.

You know a diet high in sugar is bad for you then you.
Now you know that a diet high in carbohydrates is bad because sugar and carbohydrates are exactly the same.

Every 5 grams of carbohydrates equals just over 1 teaspoon of sugar. A soft drink with 35 grams of carbohydrates gives you, (divide 35 by 5 to determine the sugar equivalent), a whopping 7 teaspoons of sugar. That's too much!

When you read food labels CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT is one of the most important things to look for, because carbohydrates have a quick and profound effect on your body chemistry. Carbohydrates cause your blood sugar to rise, which causes your pancreas to make insulin to lower the blood sugar. Insulin lowers the blood sugar by turning the sugar, (glucose), into fat and then storing that fat in your fat cells.

There is not a single disease state in all of medical literature associated with carbohydrate deficiency, however there are dozens of disease states directly associated with insulin abnormalities that are caused by carbohydrate excess.

Click here for more information on carbohydrates

No safe amount ...

Certain substances routinely added to processed foods are so bad for you that, if you see them listed in the ingredients, there's no need to read further. Just say no!

HYDROGENATED AND PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED OIL: These are the oils that contain the transfatty acids that cause heart disease. Even thought these oils are TERRIBLE for your health MANY products contain them. (No wonder heart disease is such a bad problem!) Avoid them.

READ THE INGREDIENTS BEFORE YOU READ THE NUTRITION FACTS PANEL.
If hydrogenated oil is listed my recommendation is that you choose something else.

CORN SYRUP - Corn syrup causes a blood sugar reaction that is faster and more extreme than eating pure table sugar. Products containing corn syrup are usually high in carbohydrates and practically always LOW in nutrition.

If corn syrup is listed in the ingredients, the product is unhealthy and NOTHING ELSE ON THE LABEL MATTERS.

CHEMICAL STEW - If a food is loaded with chemicals it cannot possibly be good for you!

THINK ABOUT IT: If you put a handful of vitamins in a glass of poison, would it be healthy to drink just because it had vitamins? Of course not!

If you add hydrogenated oil, corn syrup, and a handful of chemicals to otherwise healthy food, is the otherwise healthy food still good for you? Of course not!

AFTER YOU READ THE INGREDIENTS, HERE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO LOOK FOR ON LABELS

1) serving size; 2)calories per serving;
3) carbohydrates per serving; 4) total fat; 5) sodium;
6) fiber; 7) protein.

SERVING SIZE: It's important to check the serving size because the nutritional content is based on a single serving, and FREQUENTLY the serving size on the label is so small that anyone would normally eat 2 or 3 servings. For instance chips: a big bag of corn chips has 20 servings, which amounts to a little more
than a handful of chips per serving.

CALORIES PER SERVING: A single serving of corn chips contains 150 calories, but a single serving is little more than a nibble. Eat 3 servings, which is still not a lot of chips, and you have consumed 450 calories.

For some prospective, keep in mind that a 150 pound man running 6 miles an hour will consume about 300 calories in 1 full hour of running. In other words, you get more calories in the chips than you burn running 6 miles an hour for a full hour! Is it worth it?

A BIG OFFENDER is what I call the "adult candy bars". I'm referring to the "power bars" and "protein bars" that are so popular. These products are light on any real nutrition and heavy on calories. In my opinion most of them are nothing more than dressed up junk food.

CARBOHYDRATES PER SERVING: 5 grams of carbohydrates equals just over 1 teaspoon of sugar. Being high in carbohydrates MEANS being high in sugar. For example; most soft drinks have 35 grams of carbohydrates per serving, which is equal to, (35 divided by 5), or 7 teaspoons of sugar. No wonder responsible parents want the soft drink machines removed from the schools!

Corn chips are another example. Each serving, which is just a handful of chips, contains 20 grams of carbohydrate or the equivalent of 4 teaspoons of sugar, and practically no one eats just a single serving.

Another example is the popular Macaroni & Cheese dinners. One cup contains 31 grams of carbohydrate, which equals 6 teaspoons of sugar PLUS 470 mg of sodium, which is 50% of the sodium a child should have and 25% of the sodium an adult should have. Also, one cup is not a lot to eat for dinner - most people will consume at least 2 cups or more, doubling the carbohydrate and the sodium content.

SALT CONTENT: It is recommended that children get no more than 1000 mg of sodium per day, which is LESS than the amount contained a single Happy Meal from McDonalds and about the same as you get from some chips, 1 piece of processed lunch meat and a little Macaroni and Cheese dinner.

It is recommended that adults get no less than 800mg of sodium per day and no more than 2400mg of sodium per day. However, most doctors believe 2400 mg is way too high and the upper limit should be far less.

A single serving of tomato sauce, like you get in spaghetti, is 4 ounces and contains 380 mg of sodium. Compare that with the "no salt added" tomato sauce, which contains only 15 mg of sodium per 4 ounce serving. A considerable difference!

Some processed lunch meats have as much as 600 mg of sodium PER SLICE. If lunch happens to be a sandwich with 2 slices of lunch meat, a slice of cheese, (which also contains sodium), and a bag of chips, you are consuming a days worth of sodium at a single meal.

TOTAL FAT CONTENT: The most important thing to look for when reading fat content is transfatty acids. Trans-fatty acids are EXTREMELY bad for you.

The Nutrition Council determined that there is "No Safe Amount" of transfatty acid. Transfatty acids, which are found in high amounts in fried foods and all foods containing hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil can actually CAUSE heart disease. Read the label; if the food has transfatty acids, do yourself a favor, put it back on the shelf and walk away.

FIBER CONTENT: This is easy, the more the better! Foods high in fiber, low in carbohydrate and containing some protein are usually very good for you.

High fiber foods are good for you because they help keep you regular, they help keep the sticky LDL cholesterol under control, and they make you "feel full" so you don't over eat.

PROTEIN CONTENT: Another easy one, the more the better!

To sum it up;

1. READ INGREDIENTS FIRST - If the food contains unsafe ingredients nothing else matters. Nutritional content is important ONLY AFTER you determine the food has no undesirable ingredients or additives.

2. CHECK THE CARBOHYDRATES - 5 grams of carbohydrate is equal to 1 teaspoon of sugar. If a single serving contains more than 15 or 20 grams of carbohydrate, in my opinion, that is just too much sugar. Remember that eating fat does not make you fat. Eating carbohydrates is what makes you fat!

3. PAY ATTENTION TO SERVING SIZE - Often calories, carbohydrate, fat and salt content looks pretty good, but the serving size is so small it's just ridiculous. (Bet you can't eat just one!)

4. PAY ATTENTION TO THE SODIUM CONTENT - Some foods, especially fast foods and processed foods contain enormous amounts of sodium. And too much sodium leads to high blood pressure. Be sure and consider the serving size when looking at the sodium content.

5. TOTAL FAT - Remember that polyunsaturated fat content in processed foods comes primarily from hydrogenated oils. If you are certain the food contains no hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils, the fat content is not that big of a concern.

6. PROTEIN AND FIBER ARE GOOD FOR YOU - I would never reject a food because the protein or fiber content was too high.

Apply this information when reading labels you will be making consistently excellent choices!
I hope this Special Report on Understanding Food Labels better equips you to make consistently excellent health choices.

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Page 1 of this document.

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