

Interpreting Food Labels and Packaging

An Apple A Day: A Lifestyle Medicine Group
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- **Choose Foods with no Labels....** or at least labels with minimal ingredients. Whole foods come “packaged” the way nature intended
 - **Whole Food/Unprocessed Food:** Unprocessed or minimally processed foods are whole foods in which the vitamins and nutrients are still intact. The food is in its natural (or nearly natural) state. These foods may be minimally altered by removal of inedible parts, drying, crushing, roasting, boiling, freezing, etc.
 - **Processed Food:** Processed foods are changes from their natural state and made by adding salt, oil, sugar, or other substances. Most processed foods have two or three ingredients.
 - **Ultra-processed Food** Ultra-processed foods have many added ingredients such as sugar, salt, fat, and artificial colors or preservatives. Ultra-processed foods are made mostly from substances extracted from foods, such as fats, starches, added sugars, and hydrogenated fats. They may also contain additives like artificial colors and flavors or stabilizers.
- **Beware of Marketing!!!!**
 - Always be careful when things look too good to be true, like Cocoa Puffs stating there is more whole grain in them than any other ingredient. This is only because they have added several different sources of added sugar, so that none of them separately exceeds the amount of whole grain.... but together they do!
 - Don't be fooled by claims like “All natural” in a product with a laundry list of ingredients. This just means the food was at one time sourced from something natural. It can still be highly processed!
 - Gluten free does not equate to healthy. There can be very healthy gluten free foods and very unhealthy gluten free foods.
- **Choose foods with ingredients you can read and understand**
 - If you have to ask, “What is this?”, so does your body!

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 Cake (47g)	
Servings Per Container 9	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 170 Calories from Fat 70	
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 7g	11%
Saturated Fat 5g	25%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	3%
Sodium 120mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate 26g	9%

INGREDIENTS: WATER, COATING (SUGAR, HYDROGENATED PALM KERNEL OIL, COCOA PROCESSED WITH ALKALI, DISTILLED MONOGLYCERIDES, SOY LECITHIN, WHEY POWDER, VANILLIN, NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVORING), SUGAR, BLEACHED ENRICHED WHEAT FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, NIACIN, FERROUS SULFATE (IRON), THIAMIN MONONITRATE, RIBOFLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), CORN SYRUP HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP, ANIMAL AND VEGETABLE SHORTENING (TALLOW, HYDROGENATED TALLOW, COTTONSEED OIL, MONO AND DIGLYCERIDES, POLYSORBATE 60, SOY LECITHIN), MODIFIED CORN STARCH, SOY LECITHIN, SOYBEAN OIL, EGGS, EGG WHITES, NONFAT DRY MILK, MODIFIED CORN STARCH, SALT, BANANA PUREE, SODIUM ACID PYROPHOSPHATE, POLYDEXTROSE, NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, SODIUM ALGINATE, SUGAR, SODIUM POLYPHOSPHATE, DICALCIUM PHOSPHATE, BAKING SODA, DEXTROSE, SORBIC ACID, NATAMYCIN AND POTASSIUM SORBATE (TO RETAIN FRESHNESS), DEFATTED SOY FLOUR, WHEY, ADIPIC ACID, CALCIUM SODIUM CASEINATE, SOY PROTEIN ISOLATE, YELLOW 5, YELLOW 6, CELLULOSE GUM, MONOCALCIUM PHOSPHATE, FUMARIC ACID, ARTIFICIAL FLAVOR, ENZYMES. 521622
CONTAINS SOY MILK, WHEAT AND EGG.

- **Understand Serving Size**
 - Many serving sizes are not realistic representations of how much of the food most people eat.
 - You will need to **multiply calories** per serving and all nutrients per serving by **how many servings** you eat.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%

- Avoid added sugars

- Added sugars are all sugars that are added to the food or drink during processing. **Added sugars should make up less than 5% of the daily diet. Try to select foods with no added sugar or 5% or less added sugar per serving size.**
- Natural sugars refer to sugar that is natural in the whole unprocessed food (like in fruit)
- Types of added sugar:
 - Sugars: beet sugar, brown sugar, cane sugar, coconut sugar, date sugar, golden sugar, raw sugar, evaporated cane juice, and confectioner’s sugar.
 - Syrups: carob syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, agave nectar, malt syrup, maple syrup, oat syrup, rice bran syrup, and rice syrup.
 - Other added sugars: barley malt, molasses, lactose, corn sweetener, dextran, malt powder, ethyl maltol, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, galactose, glucose, disaccharides, maltodextrin, and maltose, etc.

NUTRITION FACTS	
About 8 servings per container	
Serving size	1 cup (240 ml)
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	120
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 5g	6%
Saturated Fat 1g	3%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 100mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 16g	6%
Dietary Fiber 2g	7%
Soluble Fiber 1g	
Total Sugars 7g	
Includes 7g Added Sugars	14%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 3.6mcg	20%
Calcium 350mg	25%
Iron 0.3mg	2%

- Tips on added sugars and sweeteners
 - Avoid “—ose” (glucose, dextrose, lactose, galactose, sucrose, sucralose, fructose, maltose):
 - Some are natural sugars, but if they are listed as an ingredient, they are still **ADDED SUGARS**
 - Natural Sugars: fructose, lactose, dextrose, sucrose, galactose, maltose
 - Artificial sweeteners: Sucralose
 - Be aware of “—ol”’s : Sugar alcohols: (mannitol, sorbitol, xylitol, erythritol, lactitol, isomaltose, maltitol and hydrogenated starch hydrolysates (HSH).
 - Pros:
 - Sugar alcohols contain less calories than sugar

- They do not cause tooth decay like sugar does: They may improve oral health in chewing gum
- Cons:
 - With the exception of erythritol, they are not absorbed, and travel to the large intestine intact = Laxative effect = Diarrhea and bloating
 - They have been shown to damage the gut microbiota
 - Consumption has been associated with weight gain
 - Can still cause some blood sugar rise
 - Don't change the "crave" for sweets
- Limit Stevia: Improves A1C, but bad for gut bacteria
- Avoid saccharin: Sweet'N Low
 - DNA damage? Positive association with bladder cancer---?? Maybe not in observational studies
 - Increased risk of obesity and glucose intolerance.
 - Damaging to the gut microbiome.
- Avoid aspartame: NutraSweet
 - Positive associations with HTN, breast, colorectal, and prostate cancers.
 - Increased risk of obesity and glucose intolerance
 - Damaging to the gut microbiome.
- **Know your FAT!!!**
 - **Only 20 to 30 percent of your daily calories should come from any type fat.**
 - Oil is a processed food ☹️
 - Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats are healthier choices
 - Monounsaturated Fats
 - **olive**, canola, **avocado**, safflower, sunflower
 - liquid at room temperature
 - Polyunsaturated Fats
 - corn oil, sunflower oil, soy, flaxseed, nuts, fish oils, safflower, and canola oil
 - liquid at room temperature
 - **Saturated fats** should be consumed sparingly and should ideally be no more than **5% of total calories**
 - Animal fats, butter, coconut, palm, palm kernel oils.
 - Solid at room temperature
 - Trans fats should be avoided at all costs.
 - When the Nutrition Facts label says a food contains "0g" of trans fat, but includes "partially hydrogenated oil" in the ingredient list, it means the food contains some trans fat, but less than 0.5 grams per serving. So, if you eat more than one serving, you could end up eating too much trans fat
 - **Cholesterol** intake should "**be as low as possible**". Cholesterol is unique to animal-based foods.



- **Choose low sodium**

- IDEALLY mg of sodium per serving should not exceed calories per serving
- Using % Daily Value: Aim for 5% or lower
- USDA Recommends not exceeding 2300mg salt daily
 - 1 tsp. salt = 2325mg
 - Average American consumes 3400mg daily



- **Choose whole grains**

- The whole grain should be the first ingredient: whole wheat, whole oats, whole barley.
- Look for the label to say “100% whole wheat” etc.
- May see the Whole Grain Council stamp



- **Understand % Daily Value**

- The % Daily Value (DV) tells you the percentage of each nutrient in a single serving, in terms of the daily recommended amount. If you want to consume less of a nutrient (such as saturated fat or sodium), choose foods with a lower % DV (5 percent or less). If you want to consume more of a nutrient (such as fiber), choose foods with a higher % DV (20 percent or more).
- Look for Essential Nutrients that most Americans don't get enough of:
 - Dietary fiber!!!! Need 28-35 grams daily
 - Vitamin D: Need 20mcg daily
 - Potassium: Need 4700mg daily
 - Calcium: Need 1300mg daily
 - Vitamin A: Need 900mcg daily (3000 IU daily)
 - Vitamin C: Need 90 mg daily
 - Iron: Need 18mg daily