

# Control your diabetes *For Life:*

Circular 631 B

## NUTRITION SERIES

- Remember that 15 grams of carbohydrate is a serving.
- Look at *Total Carbohydrate*, not just at *Sugars*, to see if a food will raise blood sugar.
- Always compare serving sizes on nutrition labels to those listed with the Diabetes Food Guide Pyramid.
- Look carefully at the number of servings per container. The amount of calories and nutrients listed on the label applies to one serving, not necessarily to the full quantity of food in the container.
- Calories are a measure of the amount of energy in food. You can compare the amount of calories in similar products if the serving sizes are the same.
- Look at both the amount of calories and the amount of total fat when comparing the *regular* and *low fat* versions of a food. *Low fat* doesn't necessarily mean *low calorie*.
- Look for foods with less saturated and trans fats. Choose the leanest cuts of meat.
- Cholesterol intake should be 300 mg or less per day.
- Look for foods that contain 400 mg of sodium or less per serving.



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## How to Read a Nutrition Facts Label

The Nutrition Facts label on food (Figure 1) contains information that can be helpful to people with diabetes.

### Serving Size

Compare this to the serving size listed with the Diabetes Food Guide Pyramid. For example, the serving size listed on a bottle of orange juice is 8 oz, but the serving size listed with the Diabetes Food Guide is 1/2 cup, which is 4 oz. You may need to make adjustments so that you are comparing similar serving sizes.

### Servings Per Container

Look carefully at the number of servings per container. A container that appears to be one serving may contain more than one serving.

### Amount Per Serving

The amount of calories and nutrients listed on the label applies to one serving, not necessarily to the full quantity of food in the container.

### Calories

Calories are a measure of the amount of energy in food. You can compare the amount of calories in similar products if the serving sizes are the same.

### Total Fat

Look at both the amount of calories and the amount of total fat when comparing the *regular* and *low fat* versions of a food. *Low fat* doesn't necessarily mean *low calorie*.

### Saturated Fat

Saturated fat comes mainly from animal-based foods. Saturated fat raises total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol levels in the blood. Look for foods with less saturated fat.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size (114g)	
Servings Per Container 1	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories 350</b>	Calories from Fat 160
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat 18g</b>	<b>28%</b>
Saturated Fat 3g	16%
Trans Fat 4g	
<b>Cholesterol 0mg</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium 220mg</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate 45g</b>	<b>15%</b>
Dietary Fiber 5g	19%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 10%
Calcium 2%	Iron 6%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Saturated Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4	

Figure 1. Nutrition Facts label, french fries

## Trans Fat

Trans fat is found mainly in processed foods. Trans fat also raises total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol levels in the blood. Trans fat is now listed on the label. Look for foods with little or no trans fat.

## Cholesterol

Cholesterol is found in animal-based foods. Cholesterol intake should be 300 mg or less per day.

## Sodium

In general, sodium intake should be less than 2,400 mg per day. Look for foods that contain 400 mg of sodium or less per serving. For a frozen convenience dinner or entrée, look for one that contains 800 mg of sodium or less. People with kidney disease may need to have a lower daily sodium intake.

## Total Carbohydrate

*This is probably the most important information for a person with diabetes.* Remember that 15 grams of carbohydrate is a serving. By looking at the grams of total carbohydrate in a food, you can figure out how many servings of carbohydrate it has. Most foods don't have exactly 15 grams of carbohydrate. Table 1 can be helpful in estimating carbohydrate servings.

**Table 1. Estimating carbohydrate servings**

Carbohydrate servings	Target grams of carbohydrates	Range of grams of carbohydrates
1	15	8–22
2	30	23–37
3	45	38–52
4	60	53–65

## Dietary Fiber

A food that contains 5 grams of fiber or more per serving is considered *high fiber*. A food that contains 2.5 to 4.9 grams of fiber per serving is considered a *good source* of fiber.

## Sugars

A food product that states “no added sugar” or “sugar-free” can still contain other carbohydrates. Look at *Total Carbohydrate*, not just at *Sugars*, to see if a food will raise blood sugar.

## Protein

Meats contain saturated fat and cholesterol as well as protein. Choose the leanest cuts of meat. Choose low-fat cooking methods for meat, poultry and fish. People with kidney disease may need to restrict the amount of protein they eat each day.

## Where to go for more information

- Your health care provider
- American Diabetes Association:  
**1-800-DIABETES**
- National Diabetes Education Program:  
**1-800-438-5383**  
or visit the World Wide Web  
at **[ndep.nih.gov](http://ndep.nih.gov)** or  
**[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)**
- Your county Extension office

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