



Common Mistakes to Avoid When Reading the Nutrition Facts on Food Packages



Until you become accustomed to reading food labels, it's easy to feel confused. Avoid these common mistakes when reading labels:

- A label may say the food is reduced fat or reduced sodium. That means that the amount of fat or sodium has been reduced by 25% from the original product. It doesn't mean that the food is low in fat or sodium. For example, if a can of soup originally had 1,000 milligrams of sodium, the reduced sodium product would still be a high-sodium food.
- Don't confuse the '% DV for fat' with the percentage of calories from fat. If the % DV is 15% that *does not* mean that 15% of the calories in that serving comes from fat. It means that you are using up 15% of all the fat you need for a day with one serving (based on a meal plan of 2,000 calories per day).
- Sugar on a label does not necessarily mean that sugar has been added. For example, milk naturally has sugar, which is called lactose. (However, you should not stop drinking milk just because it contains sugar! Milk is full of other important nutrients, including calcium.) Look at the list of ingredients. If you see "high-fructose corn syrup" or sugar high on the list of ingredients, it means refined sugar has been added to the product.
- Packages dispensed from vending machines, even if the package is small, often contain more than one serving. A small bag of pretzels may contain 2.5 servings. If you eat the whole package, you need to multiply the numbers by 2.5 to figure out how many calories you are eating. You can also use this method to determine the amount of sodium and other nutrients contained in the entire package.



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I just read the food label. That's why I decided to eat the package instead.