

# THE NUTRISTIC METHOD

## Reading Nutrition Labels

Companies use all sorts of gimmicks to fool you into believing their products are healthy, but the only way to actually know how healthy those packaged foods are, is to master the art of reading nutrition labels. Here's how:

### Ingredients

The place to look for what you are actually eating is on the ingredient list. Ingredients are listed in order of quantity. If there are a lot of ingredients with really long names that you can't pronounce, consider whether or not this product is worth eating.

Watch out for hidden sugar names: anything ending in 'ose' (glucose, fructose, dextrose, sucrose, lactose, maltose etc.), agave, barley malt, brown rice syrup, cane (sugar, juice, crystals, solids etc.), caramel, ethyl maltol, dextran, carob syrup, fruit juice, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup (or HFCS), and any name that includes sugar in it.

Scan the ingredients list and limit or avoid products with artificial colourings, flavourings, additives such as sodium benzoate, partially hydrogenated oils (trans fats), nitrates and nitrites; artificial sweeteners (aspartame, acesulfame, sucralose, saccharin etc.).

### Calories

These don't really matter that much as we all have different caloric needs. Don't focus only on this number.

### Serving Size

The only reason to look at the serving size is so you know how much protein, fat, fiber and carbs you will get by eating the serving size listed on the label. Serving sizes are only suggestions. You decide how many servings you need to eat of the product.

A serving size can be anything like ½ cup, 4 oz, amount in grams or one piece.

If the label says that one serving size is ½ cup, but you eat 1 cup of that food then you would have to take all of the information listed on the nutrition label and multiply it by 2. All of the numbers listed reflect how much you would get if you ate one serving.

Example: If a label says that one serving is ½ cup and it has 8 grams of fat, 4 grams of protein and 2 grams of carbs, that's how much you would get in ½ cup, but if you ate 1 cup you would have to multiply all those numbers by 2. Ignore all the percentages. Gram amounts are much more useful and often reflect the amount actually eaten.

## **Carbohydrate and Fiber**

On the nutrition label, the Total Carbohydrates is a big bold number, whereas sugar, dietary fiber, and sugar alcohol are indented underneath. These are subcategories of total carbohydrates. These are all factored into the total carbohydrates number. It's better to look at Total Carbohydrates instead of just sugar because it will give a more complete picture of how it will affect blood sugar.

Fiber does not raise blood sugar, so you can calculate “net carbohydrates”, which is the total grams of carbohydrate minus the grams of fiber, to better estimate how much their blood sugar will be impacted by eating that food.

Total carbohydrate – fiber = net carbs.

For example: a nutrition label says the product has 13 grams total carbohydrate and 3 grams fiber, so if we minus the fiber from the total carbs we are left with 10 grams net carbs.

## **Fat**

Look at the Total Fat number. The amount of all the fats listed are all added together to get the total fat grams. The fat you want to pay attention to is the trans fat number. You want to keep this as low as possible, preferably at 0g. This type of fat may increase your risk of heart disease. Check the ingredient list for hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils and limit or avoid these.

## **Protein**

Grams of protein on the label is a way to see how much of that food you need to eat to get around 20-30 grams per meal. Keep in mind the serving size on the label and the amount you actually eat.

Example: 1 large egg contains 6-7 grams of protein on the label. If you eat 2 eggs you would multiply the grams of protein by 2. So, 2 eggs would be around 12 grams of protein.

## **Watch out for health claims**

Don't be fooled by gimmicky statements such as 'fat-free,' 'all natural,' 'sugar-free,' 'no-sugar added,' 'light,' 'zero trans fats,' 'gluten-free,' or 'made with real fruit' — companies slap these terms on their products to fool you into thinking that their product is healthy, but the only way to know the true health value is to examine the nutrition and ingredients label on the back.

Companies also love to include the words “whole” and “multi-grain” on their labels, especially for breakfast cereals, pastas, breads and crackers but it doesn't necessarily mean the product is made primarily with wholegrains. Check the ingredient list and make sure the wholegrain is listed as the first ingredient (limit or avoid anything with the word “enriched” in front of it which means it's been stripped of its nutrients then some are added back in). Check the fiber content on the label — real wholegrain products should contain at least 3 grams of fiber per serving.