

Protect Your Heart: Check Food Labels to Make Heart-Healthy Choices

Make heart-healthy choices by checking food labels. Read these parts of the labels:

- The **Nutrition Facts** section tells you the serving size and how many servings are in one package. You can also learn how much total fat, sodium (salt), fiber, and other nutrients you'll get in each serving.
- **Nutrient content claims** such as "low-fat" provide reliable health claims for the food.
- The **ingredients list** tells you what's in the food.

The Nutrition Facts

Here's an example of a **Nutrition Facts** section. The serving size is at the top. How does the serving size compare to your usual serving? If you usually eat the entire can of chili with beef and beans, then double all of the numbers in this Nutrition Facts section.

Chili with Beef and Beans	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (240 ml)	
Servings per Container about 2	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 230	Calories from Fat 70
	% Daily Value
Total Fat 8g	12%
Saturated Fat 3.5g	18%
Trans Fat 0.5g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 870mg	36%
Total Carbohydrate 25g	8%
Dietary Fiber 8g	32%
Sugars 11g	
Protein 15g	

One cup of chili is one serving.

There are 2 servings in this package.

One serving has 8 grams of fat. This can has 2 servings, or 16 grams of fat.

Total Amounts

To make heart-healthy food choices, look at the totals and cut back on

- saturated fat
- sodium
- cholesterol
- trans fat

You'll also see information on fiber. To lower your risk of heart disease, eat foods with more fiber.

On the label, amounts of carbohydrates, fats and vitamins may be shown as:

- Grams, shown as g
- Milligrams, shown as mg
- Milliliters, shown as ml

A gram is a very small amount and a milligram is one-thousandth of that. For example, a nickel weighs about 5 grams. So does a teaspoonful of margarine. A milliliter is also very small. One teaspoon of oil is about one milliliter.

Here are more ways to use food labels:

- Compare labels of similar foods. Choose foods with less saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, and sodium. Choose foods with more fiber.
- Choose foods with the lowest amounts of saturated fat and zero trans fat. Look for foods with one-third or less of the total fat as saturated fat.
- If you are trying to lose weight, compare foods for calories too.

You can ask your health care team how much of these nutrients to have each day. Write your daily targets here:

- Total fat (grams): _____
- Saturated fat (grams): _____
- Trans fat (grams): _____
(Eat as little as possible.)
- Cholesterol (milligrams): _____
- Sodium (milligrams): _____
- Dietary fiber (grams): _____

Nutrient content claims

A quick way to find heart-healthy foods is to check the nutrient content claims on the label. For example, you'll see the claim "lower sodium" on some brands of chili with beef and beans. This means the product has at least 25% less sodium than the regular version. If a food is "reduced" or "less," it still can be high in sodium or saturated fat. You should read food labels carefully.

Food claims—What do they mean?

Claims for fat (per serving)
Fat free: less than ½ gram (g) of fat or saturated fat
Saturated fat free: less than ½ g of saturated fat and less than ½ g of trans fats
Low fat: 3 g or less of total fat
Low saturated fat: 1 g or less
Reduced fat or less fat: at least 25% less fat than the regular version
Trans fat free: less than ½ g per serving

Claims for cholesterol (per serving)
Cholesterol free: less than 2 milligrams (mg)
Low cholesterol: 20 mg or less
Reduced cholesterol or less cholesterol: at least 25% less cholesterol than the regular version

Claims for sodium (per serving)
Sodium free or salt free: less than 5 mg
Very low sodium: 35 mg or less
Low sodium: 140 mg or less
Reduced sodium or less sodium: at least 25% less sodium than the regular version

Claims for fiber (per serving)
High fiber: 5 g or more
Good source of fiber: 2.5 g to 4.9 g per serving

Ingredients list

Ingredients are listed in order from most to least. So the food has more of the ingredients at the top of the list and less of those at the bottom. Check the list for things you'd like to avoid, such as hydrogenated oil. For example, this ingredient list for chili with beef and beans shows no hydrogenated oil.

Chili with beef and beans

Ingredients: water, tomato puree (water, tomato paste), seasoned beef crumbles (beef, salt, spice extracts), diced tomatoes in tomato juice, red kidney beans, kidney beans. Contains less than 2% of the following ingredients: concentrate (caramel color added), jalapeno peppers, salt, dehydrated onions, sugar, dehydrated garlic, paprika, red pepper, soybean oil, soy lecithin, mono and diglycerides, mixed tocopherols, ascorbic acid, flavoring.

For more help, ask your health care team for copies of these titles:

- Toolkit No. 8: *Protect Your Heart: Make Smart Food Choices*
- Toolkit No. 9: *Protect Your Heart: Choose Fats Wisely*
- Toolkit No. 10: *Protect Your Heart: Plan and Cook Heart-Healthy Meals*



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