

# A Quick Guide to Reading Food Labels

We all get overwhelmed at the grocery store. Aisles and aisles of food all claiming to be nutritious, non-GMO, heart healthy, whole wheat, and 100% natural. How are we supposed to know what to buy? In order to make the healthiest choices possible when food shopping, understanding food labels is key. Here are some tips to help you get started.

## #1 - Understand the Ingredients

Without even reading the ingredients, take a look at the **length of the list**. The larger the number of ingredients, the more likely that the product contains preservatives, food coloring, and added flavors.

Everything on the ingredients list should be a **recognizable food item!** If it is not, it is likely a chemical additive or processed food.

The ingredients are **listed in order from greatest to least amount**. Pay attention to added sweeteners, sugars, fats, and chemical additives listed at the bottom of the list.

Look out for **trans fats**. They are listed as *partially hydrogenated* oils or fats.

A food might be marked as “whole grain” even if it is mostly **refined grains**. Look for products that are marked as *100% whole grain* on the label.

Beware of **chemical additives** that may be within foods to enhance color, flavor, or shelf life.

## #2 - Understand the Nutrition Facts

The **fiber** content on a nutrition label can help you determine if a food is a whole grain or not. Whole grains generally contain at least 3 grams of fiber and 4 grams of protein!

Packaged food producers will often add **vitamins and minerals** to their food in order to market it as healthy or having a high nutritional value even if they are still high in trans fats, sugars, and refined carbs.

With these simple tips, you will be on your way to making smarter and healthier choices at the grocery store.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 3/4 Cup (27g)	
Servings Per Container About 16	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 260	<b>Calories from Fat</b> 20
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 1g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Polyunsaturated Fat 0g	0%
Monounsaturated Fat 0g	0%
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	0%
<b>Sodium</b> 170mg	7%
<b>Potassium</b> 50mg	1%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 22g	7%
Dietary Fiber 2g	6%
Sugars 10g	
Other Carbohydrate 10g	
<b>Protein</b> 2g	3%
Vitamin A 10%	Vitamin C 10%
Calcium 10%	Iron 25%
Phosphorus 4%	Magnesium 4%

INGREDIENTS: Whole Grain Oats, Marshmallows (sugar, modified corn starch, corn syrup, dextrose, gelatin, calcium carbonate, yellows 5&6, blue 1, red 40 (artificial flavor), Sugar, Oat Flour, Corn Syrup, Corn Starch, Salt, Trisodium Phosphate, Color Added, Natural and Artificial Flavor, Vitamin E (mixed tocopherols) added to preserve freshness.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/4 Cup (38g/1.3 oz.)	
Servings Per Container About 6	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 170	<b>Calories from Fat</b> 50
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 4.5g	7%
Saturated Fat 2g	9%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Polyunsaturated Fat 1g	0%
Monounsaturated Fat 1g	0%
<b>Cholesterol</b> <5mg	1%
<b>Sodium</b> 340mg	14%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 27g	9%
Dietary Fiber <1g	2%
Sugars 7g	
<b>Protein</b> 2g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 8%	Iron 6%

INGREDIENTS: WHEAT FLOUR, DEGERMINATED YELLOW CORN MEAL, SUGAR, ANIMAL SHORTENING (CONTAINS ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING: LARD, HYDROGENATED LARD, PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED LARD), CONTAINS LESS THAN 2% OF EACH OF THE FOLLOWING: BAKING SODA, SODIUM ACID PYROPHOSPHATE, SALT, MONOCALCIUM PHOSPHATE.