

Total Nutrition

Nutrition Label 101— A Week Of Super Shopping Lessons

by *Mindy Hermann, R.D.*

(NAPSA)—If you're like me, you want to get in and out of the supermarket quickly and with everything on your list. Healthy eating is important; however, if you don't want it to take a lot of time, use the Nutrition Facts label as the best tool to help you decide what to buy.



Mindy Hermann

Lesson #1—Calories per Serving

Look at calories per serving and the suggested serving size. The portion that you usually eat might be bigger or smaller than what's listed on the label.

Understanding the calories per serving can help you figure out how a food fits into your diet.

Lesson #2—Calories from Fat

Many people don't know that fat has 9 calories per gram. To find out how many calories are from fat per serving in a food item, check the food label—it does the math for you. Compare fat calories on the labels of two different brands of the same food to see which is lower in fat to help you make your choice.

Lesson #3—Total Fat and Types of Fat

The Percent Daily Value (percent DV) shows you how total fat and saturated fat in a food compare to recommended daily amounts. For heart and overall health, choose foods that have less saturated fat and little or no trans fat.

Lesson #4—Cholesterol and Sodium

Health experts suggest limiting cholesterol and sodium for heart health. Foods that do not contain animal ingredients also do not contain cholesterol. Sodium is common in many packaged foods but can vary depending on the product. Look at both total sodium and percent DV when deciding which items to buy.

Lesson #5—Total Carbohydrate and Dietary Fiber

Several food groups—fruits, vegetables, milk and yogurt, legumes, foods made from grains—provide most of our carbohydrate and dietary fiber. Include foods that supply at least 10 percent of the DV for dietary fiber to help you reach a goal of at least 25 grams each day.

Lesson #6—Protein

Healthy choices for protein include lean meats, chicken, fish, low-fat dairy products, and legumes.

Lesson #7—Vitamins and Minerals

Every food label is required to display the percent DV for vitamins A and C, calcium and iron, and are permitted to display a longer list of vitamins and minerals. For example, labels for all Total cereals show that they supply 100 percent of the DV for at least 11 vitamins and minerals.

Mindy Hermann, M.B.A., R.D., is a nutrition writer for women's, health and fitness magazines. She is the co-author of "Change One" and the American Medical Association's "Family Health Cookbook."