

Nutrition Labeling

Reading the label can save time, money and your diet.

The rapid development of new foods, new packaging and new marketing methods makes it important for you to know the nutritional content of the foods you buy. Food labels can help you make good choices in the supermarket.

Information, please...

Most of the time, food labels will give you three kinds of information: serving size and the number of servings; the number of calories and grams of protein, carbohydrates and fats in each serving; and the percentage of the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances for protein, five vitamins and two minerals found in each serving.

Watch the figures...

The figures on the label are the minimum amount of nutrients the product contains. Use labels to figure the nutrient content of a product or to figure out how an unfamiliar food might fit into your diet.

Anytime a manufacturer claims his food is "enriched" or "fortified"— or if he claims the food is high in protein or low in fat — he must put a nutritional label on the item. Look at the information on the label when you shop, so you'll know what you are buying.

Helpful when looking for specifics...

Labels can help when you're looking for the best nutritional buy, too. For example, you might check different brands to find out which canned fruit offers the largest amount of vitamin C.

If you're on a special diet, you may need to know how many calories a food contains, or whether it is low in sodium. If you're concerned about cholesterol, you might want to know what kind of fat a food contains.

Most food manufacturers voluntarily include this kind of nutritional information on their product labels. Anytime a manufacturer claims his food is "enriched" or "fortified"— or if he claims the food is high in protein or low in fat — he must put a nutritional label on the item. Look at the information on the label when you shop, so you'll know what you are buying.

For more information on nutrition labeling; contact your local county Extension office.