

## READING THE FOOD LABEL

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In the grocery store, with all those food choices in front of you, how do you make a healthy choice for good diabetes management?

One of the most valuable tools when trying to choose what food to buy is the nutrition facts food label, located on all pre-packaged products. The food label has a lot of information, including: serving size, calories, types of fat, carbohydrate and fiber. Once you get the hang of it, it's easy to use and understand.

Let's start with the serving size. All information on the nutrition facts label is based on the serving size, for example: one slice of wheat bread, eight ounces of milk, one-half cup of cooked rice, one tablespoon of olive oil or two taco shells.

Compare this serving size to what you actually eat. For example, if you eat a half serving, cut all the figures in half to see how much of each nutrient you're getting.

The food label shows you how many calories are in that food. If you are trying to limit the number of calories you eat, this information can help.

*"It's always advisable to read the labels, especially when you want to check the sugar count or the calorie count. So reading labels are important, especially when someone says, 'Why don't you try this new this?'"*

When you have diabetes you should be aware of how much carbohydrate you eat, because it raises your blood glucose faster than other types of food. Take a look at the total carbohydrate on the food label. Use the total carbohydrate information to help make a food choice that will keep your blood glucose in a healthy range.

*"Now I do wheat bread. And so the bread or whole grain bread, things like that, that's not that bad. It's a bit of a change ... I like it. But now I really try to stay away from white bread. I can't even remember the last time I ate white bread."*

Look at the fiber content as well, because foods that contain fiber provide you with many nutritional benefits. Aim for 25 to 35 grams of fiber everyday.

Having diabetes puts you at an increased risk of heart disease, so take a look at the total fat, saturated fat and trans fat per serving. Saturated fat and trans fat are the kinds that increase your risk of heart disease, so limit your intake.

Information on cholesterol, sodium and protein are also included and may be helpful in controlling your blood cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight.

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Keep in mind that the percentages given are based on someone who needs 2,000 calories a day. Talk to your diabetes care team about how many calories you should eat each day.

When making healthy food choices in the grocery store, read the food label. With a little time and effort, using this tool can make a big difference in your diabetes management.