

## Nutrition Facts

Read the Label

# TIPS FOR PARENTS

## Challenge Your Kids To Get Their Food Facts First

As a parent, you can help your kids learn about nutrition and establish healthy dietary habits. It's easy to talk about food choices throughout the day.



At Home



At the Supermarket



At Restaurants



While Packing a Lunch



U.S. FOOD & DRUG  
ADMINISTRATION

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# Be a Role Model for Label Reading

Helping your kids understand how to read the Nutrition Facts label on food and beverage packages is important. After all, the label is a tool for making **healthy food choices** that they'll be able to use **throughout their lives**.

## Family Actions for Making Smart Food Choices

Use teachable moments in everyday activities. These tips can make it easy to help your kids get their food facts first! Work together to explore using the Nutrition Facts label to make informed dietary choices.

## It's What's On the Back (or Side) That Counts

When they're snacking, remind your kids to check out the Nutrition Facts label on food and beverage packages. That's where they can find the nutrition information they need to know.

## Tips for Kids

Parents have lots of opportunities to discuss nutrition with their kids. And even though busy schedules mean that sometimes families can't eat together, there are plenty of times to talk about healthy eating habits at home with your child—even away from the dinner table.

On the following pages, you'll find practical tips to help your kids get their food facts first. They'll be learning to make informed nutrition decisions and establishing smart dietary habits that can last a lifetime.



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# Using the Nutrition Facts Label

- 1
- 2
- 3



1

## Size up Servings

The information listed on the Nutrition Facts label is usually based on one serving of the food. Encourage your children to pay attention to the serving size and the number of servings they eat or drink to discover the total number of calories and nutrients they are consuming.

2

## Consider the Calories

Calories from food provide the energy children's bodies need to function and grow. To keep your children's bodies healthy, balance the number of calories they eat and drink with the number of calories their bodies use.

When checking a food's calories, remind your kids to follow this guide: 100 calories per serving of an individual food is considered a moderate amount and 400 calories or more per serving of an individual food is considered high in calories.

3

## Choose Nutrients Wisely

% Daily Value (%DV) shows how much a nutrient in a serving of the food contributes to a total daily diet. Use %DV to see if a serving of the food is high or low in an individual nutrient and to compare food products. Remind your kids to follow this guide: 5% DV or less of a nutrient per serving is considered low and 20% DV or more of a nutrient per serving is considered high.

Choose foods that are higher in nutrients to get more of (dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium) and lower in nutrients to get less of (saturated fat, trans fat, sodium, and added sugars).

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# At Home

## Kids Can...

### Guess the Serving Size

When your kids are choosing snacks, challenge them to measure out what they think is one serving. Then have them measure out the serving size according to the Nutrition Facts label.

Discuss any difference in amounts so they can see how many servings they're actually eating or drinking. Remind them that if they are eating two servings, they are getting double the calories and nutrients!

### Prepare Individual Servings of Snacks

Have your child check the Nutrition Facts label on their favorite snacks and measure out single servings according to the serving size listed on the label. Keep individual servings in resealable plastic bags or containers so you can quickly grab-and-go.

### Read the Label with Friends

When your child has friends over, challenge them to Read the Label when they are choosing snacks. Encourage them to see who can find the most interesting fact on a Nutrition Facts label and have them try to stump the others. Ask them to guess things like: How big is one serving of the snack? How many servings are in the package? Which snacks are higher or lower in calories or a particular nutrient?

## Tips for Parents to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Encouraging your kids to read the Nutrition Facts label starts in your own kitchen.

### Play Online

Encourage your children to learn more about the Nutrition Facts label online.

- Hang out with other kids at the Snack Shack in the virtual world of Whyville and play two fun, educational games—Label Lingo and Snack Sort—and practice reading the label and making healthy snack choices!
- Check out the Nutrition Facts Label Online to explore the various sections of the label with a more in-depth look at specific nutrients and their role in your daily diet.

### Make the Shopping List Together

Have your child Read the Label on food and beverage packages in the pantry and refrigerator. Remind your child to pay particular attention to those foods that are higher in nutrients to get more of and lower in nutrients to get less of. Then, invite your child to add “restocking” items to the family shopping list using this new knowledge as a guide.

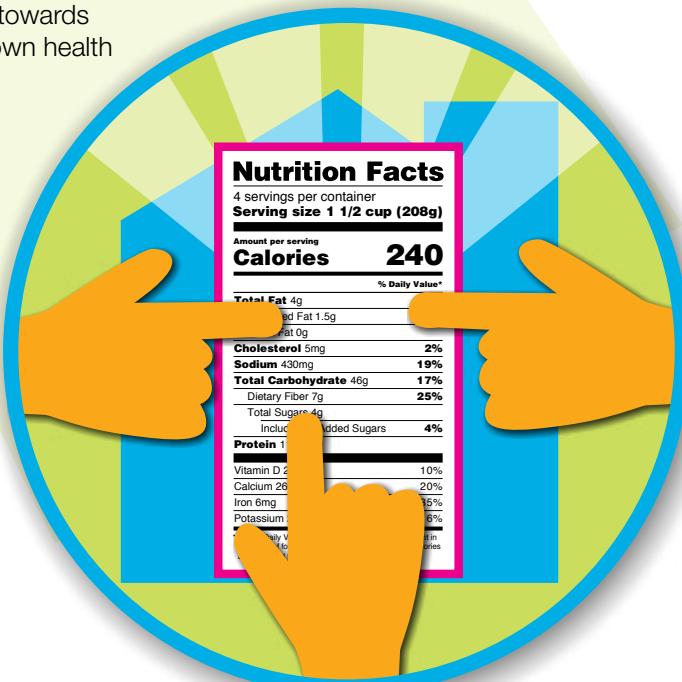
### Read Labels While Unpacking Groceries

You and your kids can check out labels while putting away your purchases. Have your child choose which food he or she thinks was a smart purchase that day and use the Nutrition Facts label on the food package to explain why.

## You Can...

### Compliment Label Reading

If you see your children reading a label, make sure to compliment them and encourage this action. Let them know they are taking important steps towards managing their own health and nutrition.



# At Lunch Time

## Kids Can...

### Take the Great Lunchbox Challenge!

Challenge your child to pack a healthy 600-calorie lunch (or other calorie amount appropriate for your child) to take to school or enjoy at home. Have your child Read the Label on sandwich ingredients and snacks to see how many calories and nutrients each contains!

Consider different sandwich ingredients, such as:

- Bread options higher in dietary fiber, such as whole grain tortillas, pitas, and English muffins.
- Spreads lower in saturated fat, such as mustard and hummus instead of mayonnaise.
- Tasty “extras” full of nutrients to get more of such as leafy greens, cucumber and tomato slices, avocados, and colorful chopped peppers (red, green, and yellow).

Try these snack tips:

- For snacks that contain more than one serving per package, have your children measure out a single serving according to the label. Place them into resealable plastic bags or containers and pack the individual servings in the lunch bag.
- Read the Label on snack bars. These lunch box additions are easy and “packable,” but many of them are more like a dessert. Look for snack bars that are closer to 100 calories per serving and are lower in nutrients to get less of, like added sugars and saturated fat.

## Tips for Parents to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Whether packing a lunch or eating at the cafeteria, your kids can start to take control of their own food choices.

## You Can...

### Read the Label in the Cafeteria Line

Remind your child to check out the Nutrition Facts label on food and beverage packages in the cafeteria.

Encourage your child to choose foods that are higher in nutrients to get more of and lower in nutrients to get less of. He or she can Read the Label on dairy products, snacks, and many other cafeteria items. Emphasize that the Nutrition Facts label can help your child to choose nutrients wisely.

### Leave a Note

Do you pack your child's lunch? If so, leave a friendly note reminding him or her to Read the Label on the foods you've packed. Point out one healthy item, such as a bag of mini carrots.

### Remind your kids to Read the Label on beverages, too!



# At Restaurants

## Tips for Parents to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Remind your kids to look for nutrition information at restaurants ... and use these tips.

### Kids Can...

#### ● Look Online Before You Go

Your child can check out the nutrition information on some restaurants' websites before going there to eat. This is a great chance for your kids to discover nutrition facts about the foods they like and decide what to order in advance. Remind them to consider the calories and choose nutrients wisely when selecting menu items.

#### ● Check Out the Nutrition Information

Have your child look for nutrition information at the restaurant. If it's not posted, he or she can ask if it's available. Many restaurants offer a number of types and sizes of foods, and obtaining nutrition information is the first step towards making informed choices about what to order.

#### ● Compare Different Foods and Meal Sizes

Have your kids check out the differences in calories and nutrients between various menu choices. Compare foods that are prepared different ways, like grilled chicken vs. fried chicken, baked potatoes vs. French fries ... and compare small vs. large portions. And, remember that a "super-sized" item can mean doubling (or tripling) the calories and nutrients because the serving size is larger.

#### ● Swap Out One Item

See if your child can identify menu items that are lower in nutrients to get less of. Challenge your child to replace one food higher in saturated fat, sodium, or sugars that he or she would have ordered with one that is lower in these nutrients. Now that's smart swapping!



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# At The Supermarket

## Kids Can...

### ● Use Supermarket Smarts

Challenge your child to Read the Label on different items at the supermarket. This is a great opportunity to compare different foods and use the Nutrition Facts label on food and beverage packages.

### ● Check out the Cereal Aisle

Ask your child to try to find a cereal that is lower in added sugars and higher in dietary fiber. Have him or her compare that cereal to one you currently have at home.

### ● Compare Frozen Pizzas and Vegetables

Send your child to the freezer section to Read the Label on different frozen pizzas and vegetables (including ones with and without sauce). Ask him or her to find ones that are lower in saturated fat and sodium and a higher in dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium.

### ● Read the Label on Nuts and Seeds

Nut butters and unsalted nuts and seeds can make great snacks because they are good sources of protein, healthy fats, dietary fiber, vitamins, and minerals. However, it's easy to eat more of these snacks than intended, so remind your child to check the serving sizes.

## Tips for Parents to Help Kids Make Smart Choices!

Supermarkets offer almost unlimited opportunities for exploring the Nutrition Facts label and making smart food choices!

## You Can...

### ● Continue Learning After Leaving the Store

Make the car ride home and the unpacking of groceries into teachable moments. Ask your kids if they learned anything interesting while reading labels at the store. Use their answers as a springboard for discussing how easy it is to use the Nutrition Facts label on food packages.

