

GUIDE TO READING AND
UNDERSTANDING

FOOD PACKAGING LABELS



D · R · E ·  · M.[®]
— w e l l n e s s —

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This guide is a bonus supplement to go with the book, *DREAM Wellness: The 5 Keys to Raising Kids for a Lifetime of Physical and Mental Health*. Anytime I reference “the book”, that is what I am referring to. I will also reference the specific chapter of the book which provides greater detail to the topic. If you do not have a copy, you can order your Kindle or printed version now at www.DREAMWellnessBook.com.

With the plethora of packaged food items found in a traditional grocery store, choosing the best options can be overwhelming for many. This guide will reduce the mystery and help you find the best items quickly.

Why is the nutrition label so important?

It gives you a peek into how this food fits into your diet..

- Helps you make decisions: yay or nay
- Is this a sometimes food or a staple food?

Makes you aware of portion size.

Informs you what is this product actually made from.

Allows you to compare brands to find the best to meet your needs.

Provides you the opportunity to evaluate if the enticing phrases on the front of the package live up to their word.



Labels at a glance...

1. Check the serving size and number of servings per container

2. Calorie count! Here is where the number of calories per serving is listed

3. Know your fats and reduce sodium for your health

4. Look for foods rich in these nutrients. Make sure to keep sugars LOW!

5. % Daily Value key. To help balance your diet

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 2/3 cup (55g) Servings Per Container About 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 230	Calories from Fat 72
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	12%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	12%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A	10%
Vitamin C	8%
Calcium	20%
Iron	45%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily value may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
	Calories: 2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375g
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g

4 Most Important Areas on the Label

Ingredients

Serving Size

Number of Servings Per Container

Nutrients



Most Important Areas on the Label:

Ingredients

Look for a short list of ingredients.

Ingredients are listed in order of the greatest amount to the least amount contained in the product.

Look for words that are familiar and that resemble actual food.

- > Not chemical names or preservatives (See Ch. 5-17)

Look for the word “whole grain” to determine if a grain product is made with whole grains or refined grains (see Ch. 5-3).

Make sure added sugars and other names for sugar (glucose, sucrose, fructose, high fructose corn syrup, maple syrup) are listed toward the end of the list if present at all (see Ch. 5-12).

- > Ideally, look for foods without added sugars.
- > Natural sugars found in actual fruit are fine in appropriate amounts.
- > Avoid artificial sweeteners (see Ch. 5-13).

Labels must also list if product contains any common allergens or manufactured near them.

- >Wheat, gluten, corn, dairy, soy, shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, fish





Most Important Areas on the Label:

Serving Size

Pay attention to what measurement the serving size is in, such as:

- Cups
- Tablespoons
- Pieces, quantity
- Teaspoons

Knowing the serving size helps you understand how much you can eat to consume the listed number of calories and other nutrients.

Don't assume one package = 1 serving

Serving sizes may be deceptively small

- This is often done to make the calories, sugar grams, or fat grams seem smaller on the nutrition label

Be honest with yourself about how much you would be eating

Number of Servings per Container

If a package seems like one serving for you, make sure to see how many servings are in that container.

- If there are 2 servings and you plan on eating the entire amount, make sure to double all the numbers in the nutrition facts label

This can be the single biggest oversight people make when evaluating food labels...

- You may be getting double or even triple the calories and sugar!

Nutrients to Pay Attention to...

Calories

You don't need to count every calorie, but it's still a valuable piece of info. Not all calories are created equally, so it's a good idea to evaluate where these calories are coming from (see Ch. 5-11).

- Calories from added sugars, trans fats, or inflammatory oils should raise your eyebrows (see Ch. 5-12).
- Avoid inflammatory oils: canola, grapeseed, safflower, sunflower (small amounts can be ok), peanut, hydrogenated oils, cottonseed, corn oil, vegetable oil, soybean oil and any oil used in deep frying (see Ch. 5-4).
- Calories from fat (see next page).

Vitamins and Minerals

A few vitamins and minerals are listed on a nutrition label but that doesn't mean these are the only vitamins/minerals that are in the product.

Depending on space, only some of the 14 commonly found vitamins/minerals will be listed.

- Biotin, choline, folate, niacin, pantothenic acid, riboflavin, thiamin, Vit A, B6, B12, C, D, E and K

These will be listed as percentage of calories based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

- You may need more or less than 2000 calories per day
- 5% or less is considered low
- 20% or less is considered high



There are three types of carbohydrates (see Ch. 5-12 for details):

- Fiber- these are complex carbohydrates
- Starches- these are also complex carbohydrates
- Sugar- these are simple carbohydrates

Fiber

Because humans cannot breakdown fiber, it helps prevent overeating by filling you up. Fiber also aids in digestion, helps maintain blood sugar and can have a positive affect on cholesterol levels.

How much fiber should you aim for per day?

- Women: 25-35 grams per day
- Men: 38-48 grams per day
- **Examples:** 1 cup broccoli = 2.4g, ½ cup oatmeal = 4g, ½ cup blueberries = 3.6g
- RDA value is the lower end of range
- You may require more, depending on your specific needs
- There are many foods rich in fiber that don't have a nutrition label

Seek out these foods rich in fiber:

- Beans/legumes (lentil and chickpea pastas), flaxseeds, chia seeds, quinoa, steel cut oats, veggies, figs, apples and berries.

Starches

Starches are complex carbohydrates made of simple sugars strung together. The body needs to break starches down into sugars to use them for energy.

Starches are found in foods and vegetables such as:

- Bread, cereal, pasta, rice, potatoes, peas, and corn.

Even though starches can be a good source of energy, it is wise to keep them to a minimum in the every day diet especially those from refined breads, cereals and pasta as well as white rice and skinless white potatoes. Look for starches that are not refined and have fewer (if any) added sugars such as whole grains.

Sugar

When it comes to label reading, you should be most aware of "Added Sugars". (You can read all about sugar in chapter 5-12 of the book.) If the label lists added sugars in addition to naturally occurring sugars, that is great info to have. Naturally occurring sugars typically come from dairy, fruit, dates, dried fruit, etc. While all sugars can impact the body in a negative way, at least you can take comfort in knowing that the natural sugars are not refined or processed.

Pay attention to where on the ingredient list sugar is listed.

- Is it one of the first 3-4 ingredients or is it further down the list?
- Towards the top = more of the product's composition is sugar

The American Heart Association says women shouldn't have more than 6 tsp of added sugar (24 grams) per day. Men shouldn't have more than 9 tsp of added sugar (36 grams) per day.

- American's on average consume 82 grams of added sugar per day!

Spectrum of Sugar

Sugar is hard to avoid because it is in so many food items. Therefore here is a list of sugars from best to worst:

- Raw, organic honey
- Whole dates
- Grade A dark maple syrup
- Molasses
- Coconut sugar
- Raw sugar, sucanat

At all costs, avoid high fructose corn syrup (see chapter 5-12) and artificial sweeteners (see chapter 5-13). Acceptable sugar alternatives can also be found in chapter 5-13.

All substances that are perceived as sweet by the body (calorie containing and non-caloric) will stimulate the digestive process in the body and halt the migrating motor complex

- This is significant if you suffer from constipation or deal the GI pathogens and conditions such as SIBO/SIFO.

Sugar (continued)

Don't let them fool you! Sugar can be disguised on food packaging labels in many ways. Here is a list of what you may see (not all inclusive):

High-fructose corn syrup, isoglucose natural corn syrup, maize syrup, fruit fructose, glucose syrup, crystalline fructose, evaporated cane juice, fructose sweetener, agave nectar, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, crystal dextrose, anhydrous dextrose, dextran, brown sugar, cane crystals, cane sugar, confectioners sugar, powdered sugar, diatase, castor sugar, corn sweetener, honey, date sugar, fruit juice concentrate, fruit juice, liquid fructose, golden syrup, grape sugar, buttered syrup, refiner's syrup, glucose solids, caramel, malt syrup, demerara sugar, yellow sugar, golden sugar, treacle, muscovado, panocha, barbados sugar, barley malt, maple syrup, turbinado sugar, mannose, molasses, pancake syrup, raw sugar, beet sugar, sugar, white sugar, fructose, maltose, lactose, sucrose, carbitol, concentrated fruit juice, corn sweetener, diglycerides, disaccharides, Florida crystals, invert sugar, palm sugar, carob sugar/syrup, coconut sugar, galactose, glucitol, glucoamine, ethyl maltol, hexitol, inversol, isomalt, maltodextrin, malted barley, malts, mannitol, sorbitol, nectars, pentose, raisin syrup, ribose, rice syrup, rice malt, rice syrup solids, sorghum syrup, sucanat, and zylose, etc.



Fat is not always be a bad thing, depending on where the fat is coming from. In fact, fat is essential in the every day diet. It is important to understand the different types of fat found in certain foods. This is described in great detail in chapter 5-14 of the book.

Saturated Fat

Think butter, coconut oil, dairy, fatty meats, palm oil, ghee, etc...

Polyunsaturated Fats

Essential Omega 3: walnuts, fish, flaxseeds

Essential Omega 6: canola, peanut, soy, nuts/seeds, sunflower, safflower, grapeseed and corn. Most of these oils are super-refined. Whole nuts and seeds are preferred sources of Omega 6 as opposed to their oils.

Monounsaturated Fats

Think olive oil and avocado oil

Trans Fats

Stay away from all trans fats which show up as hydrogenated oil or partially hydrogenated oil.

In general, look for monounsaturated fats and some high quality organic saturated fats found in nut/seeds, fish and shellfish.

Fat can be tricky, especially in snacks when it's combined with sugar/salt and refined carbs = addictive!

Protein

Get a variety of proteins: plant and animal-based (see Ch.5-15).

- Think nuts, seeds, beans/legumes (bean based pastas), tofu, seafood, eggs, free-range poultry, grass-fed beef, lean pork.

The amount daily protein required (Dietary Reference Intake) is 0.36 grams of protein per pound (0.8 grams per kg) of body weight. (This may vary based on activity level.) This amounts to:

- 56 grams per day for the average sedentary man
- 46 grams per day for the average sedentary woman

- Quality matters!
- Look for organic
- Look for humanely raised, heritage raised, grass-fed, pasture raised

Sodium

Generally choose products without added salt.

- Season your own food with higher quality, natural salts
- Items like chips and cheese will have added salt but these items should only be a small portion of your diet

Low sodium is considered 140 mg or less per serving

CREDIT & REFERENCES:

A huge thank you to Paula Sturm, RDN, FMN, CFSP, Medical Nutrition Therapist, Master Mindset Coach of Radically Nourished <https://www.radicallynourished.com> 858-333-4096

<https://www.fda.gov/media/81776/download#:~:text=The%20top%20of%20the%20Nutrition,on%20the%20Nutrition%20Facts%20Label.&text=The%20nutrition%20information%20about%20the,is%20based%20upon%20one%20serving.>

<https://www.eatright.org/-/media/files/eatrightdocuments/nnm/shopsmartgetthefactsonfoodlabels.pdf>

BONUS ITEMS:

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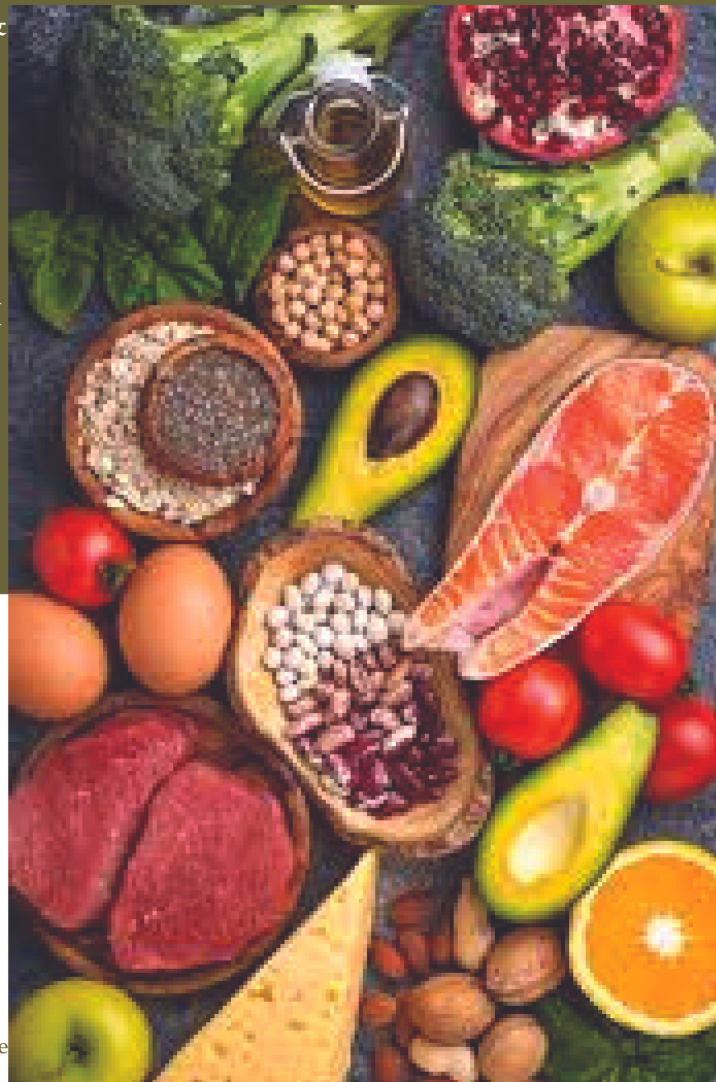
*Nourished***List of Ingredients to Avoid**

Sodium nitrate and nitrites	Sulfites	Azodicarbonamide
Potassium bromate	Propyl gallate	BHA/BHT
Propylene glycol	Butane	MSG (monosodium glutamate)
Disodium inosinate	Disodium guanylate	Enriched flour
rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone)	Refined vegetable oils (soybean, corn, safflower, canola, grapeseed, peanut oil) + Palm Oil	Sodium and Potassium benzoate
Brominated vegetable oil	Olestra	Carrageenan
Polysorbate 60	Camauba wax	Magnesium sulphate
Chlorine dioxide	Paraben	Sodium carboxymethyl cellulose
Saccharin	Aspartame	High-fructose corn syrup
Acesulfame potassium	Sucralose	Agave nectar
Bleached starch/flour	Tert butylhydroquinone	Red #40
Blue #1	Blue #2	Citrus red #1
Citrus Red #2	Green #3	Vanillin
Yellow #5 and #6	Red #2	Red #3
Caramel coloring	Brown HT	Orange B
Bixin	Norbixin	Cottonseed oil
Artificial Flavors	Autolyzed yeast extract/yeast extract	Calcium propionate
Calcium peroxide	DATAM	Dimethylpolysiloxane
Fructose/Fructose syrup	Gellan, Xanthan, Guar Gum	Methylparaben
Dextrose, Maltodextrin	Mono and Di glycerides	Neotame
Hydrogenated and Partially Hydrogenated oils	Propylparabens	Sodium phosphate
Isolate proteins	TBHQ	Titanium Dioxide

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Pantry

CHOOSE ORGANIC WHENEVER POSSIBLE



MEAT, POULTRY, & EGGS:

Grass fed beef
Bison

Humanely raised Pork
organic, free range poultry
Pasture-Raised eggs

FISH & SHELLFISH

All wild caught fish and shellfish (except Tilapia)

VEGETABLES AND HERBS

All fresh Vegetables and Herbs

Fresh Dried Mushrooms
Sun-Dried Tomatoes

NUTS & SEEDS

All Raw Nuts and Seeds
Sugar- and carrageenan-free nut milks (such as Almond and Cashew)
Tahini

SPICES & DRIED HERBS

Black Pepper: ground or whole peppercorns

All Spices: ground or whole
All Dried Herbs

Spice Blends with no preservatives, additives, or sugar

Naturally Sourced Salt:
Himalayan or Real Salt Brand

FATS & OILS

Avocado Oil
Coconut Oil
Ghee

Grass-Fed Butter
Olive Oil: Extra Virgin
For Raw Use Only:
Walnut Oil
Toasted Sesame Oil

CONDIMENTS

*All No-Sugar-Added, Naturally Sweetened, no Preservatives
Avocado Mayonnaise
BBQ Sauce
Dried Fruits (unsulfured)
Fish Sauce

Fruit-Juice-Sweetened
Dried Cranberries and Tart Cherries
Hummus: no Canola Oil
Mustard
Vinegar

NON-DAIRY

*No Sugar Added or Naturally Sweetened
Coconut Yogurt
Nut-Based Cheeses, Butters, and Sauces

SNACKS

Grain Free Tortilla Chips
Coconut Chips:
Unsweetened, Toasted Coconut
Jerkies: Naturally Sweetened
Crackers: Grain Free

DRY GOODS

Non-grain Flours: Almond, Cassava, Coconut, and Flax
Arrowroot or Tapioca Powder for thickening
No-Sugar Added Coconut Flakes/Chips
Vanilla Beans
100% Cacao Bars and Raw Powder

NATURAL SWEETENERS

*Used in Moderation
Honey: Organic, Locally Sourced, Grade A Dark
Maple Syrup, Molasses

CANNED & JARRED

*Glass Packaged or Tetra Boxed, BPA-Free Cans
*No-Sugar-Added
Coconut Milk: Gum Free
Vanilla Extract
Tomato Products
Olives: Black and Green
Capers
Dried Legumes, Lentils, and their Pastas
*Choose Cooked Beans in Tetra Box Varieties or BPA Free Cans
*Choose Boxed over Canned:
Beef Broth
Chicken Broth
Vegetable Broth

FRUITS

All fresh fruits

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Grocery Store Shopping Tips and Food Storage Tips

- ✿ Make a weekly menu plan
- ✿ Draw up a list of your necessities for the week
- ✿ Don't shop hungry
- ✿ Buy only the produce you will use for the next 3-4 days, go to the store more often to cut down on waste
- ✿ Use delicate produce like leafy greens, soft fruits, berries, fresh peas, zucchini, etc in the beginning of the week and save heartier veggies, such as broccoli, cauliflower, root veggies, etc, for the end of the week
- ✿ Don't over buy in the bulk section
- ✿ Shop mostly the perimeter of the store
- ✿ Wrap leafy greens and herbs in paper towel and store in plastic bags in the refrigerator to keep fresher, longer
- ✿ Remove rubber bands and twist ties from produce before storage
- ✿ Shop for in-season produce: <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide>
- ✿ Buy wild-caught fish, organic and pasture-raised eggs and chicken, grass-fed beef, and heritage raised pork
- ✿ Refrain from buying fortified foods: often they are refined products
- ✿ Buy organic whenever possible or at least the foods on the Dirty Dozen List: <https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty-dozen.php>
- ✿ Seek out frozen veggies and fruits but stay away from frozen pre-made meals
- ✿ Buy raw nuts in bulk and store in the freezer or fridge to protect the fragile oils
- ✿ Buy mostly whole food items and fewer packaged and ultra-processed items
- ✿ **Read labels!!**
 - ✿ The ingredients list is the *most important* aspect of the label
 - ✿ Look for real food ingredients, the shorter the list the better
 - ✿ **Stay away from** preservatives, artificial colors, natural and artificial flavors, artificial sweeteners, gums and thickeners (especially if you have GI issues), MSG, nitrates, sulfites, carrageenan
 - ✿ No more than 4 grams of sugar per serving
 - ✿ Notice *how many servings* are in a container
 - ✿ **Avoid:** canola oil, peanut oil, soy oil, corn oil, vegetable oil, palm oil, cottonseed oil
Use very sparingly: sunflower oil, safflower oil, grapeseed oil

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- ✿ When buying grains: choose grains in their least processed, closest to whole form as possible. Breads (unless whole grain and sprouted), wheat pastas, instant oats have a negative impact on your blood sugar.
- ✿ Buy olive oil in small quantities and in dark containers. Look for a “harvest date” or “pressed on date” or a third-party certification seal (PDO, DOP, or COOC) to guarantee authenticity or buy EVOO from Australia or Chile.
- ✿ Choose organic bottled herbs and spices for the best quality and eliminate exposure to irradiation
- ✿ **Best If Used By/Before** date indicates when a product will have the best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- ✿ **Use By** date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date except for when used on infant formula.
- ✿ **Freeze By** date indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
- ✿ **Sell By** date tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.
- ✿ Try to buy at least one new produce item to experiment with each week
- ✿ Aim to get the rainbow of colors in most days of the week. Red, orange, yellow, green, white, blue/purple (especially focus on this color, it’s the least consumed)
- ✿ Keep hardy herbs like rosemary and thyme on hand and use them often. They last for awhile in the fridge.
- ✿ Store tomatoes on the counter, never in the fridge. They lose their flavor there.
- ✿ Store unripe avocados on the counter, as soon as they are ripe store them in the fridge for longevity.
- ✿ If you want ripe bananas faster, remove the plastic tape on the ends. If you want to keep them from ripening too fast, leave the plastic on. Never store bananas in the fridge.
- ✿ Fennel that is bulbed shaped and not straight up and down, is more flavorful.
- ✿ Bell peppers with 4 “feet” are sweeter and best eaten raw. Pepper with 3 “feet” are best for cooking.
- ✿ Only wash your berries right before eating to help them last longer. Store strawberries in layers between sheets of paper towel for longevity.
- ✿ Onions and garlic do not need to be refrigerated
- ✿ Keep potatoes and sweet potatoes stored in a cool dark place but not in the fridge
- ✿ Keep basil in a glass of water on the counter, not in the fridge.