

How To Use the Nutrition Facts Label

I'm moving out of the dorms and into an apartment with a few of my teammates. I'll be responsible for my own meals, but I don't have much experience grocery shopping. Planning healthful meals is important for my athletic performance, but I'm not sure how to pick the best foods.

HOW CAN I USE FOOD LABELS TO HELP ME?

In the highly competitive world of collegiate athletics, the difference between first and last can be small. Optimal eating habits can give you an edge over your competitors, but planning and selecting a high-quality diet can be challenging. Using the Nutrition Facts label and the ingredient list on foods will make it easier. (For the best food options, see next page.)

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: NUTRITION FACTS

1. Check the serving size first. All the numbers on this label are for a 2/3-cup serving.
2. This package has eight servings. If you eat the whole thing, you are eating eight times the amount of calories, carbs, fat, etc., shown on the label.
3. Total Carbohydrate shows you the types of carbs in the food, including sugar and fiber.
4. Choose foods with more fiber, vitamins and minerals.
5. Primary use for the item (e.g., prepractice or afternoon snack, midcompetition energy boost) may dictate how you prioritize what's shown on the label. A registered dietitian can determine what to look for.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR: INGREDIENT LIST

- Avoid stimulants, such as caffeine.
- Be wary of "marketing words" that aren't descriptive of nutritional quality, like natural, processed, health, local, etc.

Be mindful, ingredients are listed in the order of the quantity used with the greatest amounts listed first in descending order.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	← 2
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories 230	
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Written by ASPDA and SHPN Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs). For more information on fueling for your sport, consult an RDN who specializes in sports, particularly a Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD).



Here are tips to help you make healthful choices when selecting foods. Striving to meet all of these recommendations is optimal, but sometimes that's not possible. Remember to focus on your total diet.

Cereal, Pasta, Rice, Granola Bars, Crackers, Bread

- Grains and starches are a great carbohydrate source - the fuel of choice for training and competition.
 - Choose products made with whole grains, such as wheat or rye, often to increase nutrients like fiber in your diet.
- Athletes with low iron, look for foods with 20% or more of the iron daily value (DV).

Salad Dressings

- Dressings such as olive oil, avocado oil or tahini-based can be a healthy source of fat in your diet. Lower-fat versions may not always be healthier.
- Use smaller portions.

Beef, Pork, Chicken, Fish

- Choose lean meats high in protein and low in saturated fat. Look for cuts with “loin” or “round” in the name, or aim for ground meat with an 85/15 ratio or better.
- Beef has the most iron among meats (nearly 20% DV), which is especially important for women.
- Fresh or canned fish packed in water offer a great combo of protein and healthy omega-3 fats.

Sauces (Spaghetti, Alfredo, Salsa, Nacho Cheese)

- Look for whole foods, such as tomatoes or milk, as the first two to three foods in the ingredient list.
- Use smaller portions of high-fat sauces. Cream or cheese-based sauces, like Alfredo or cheese dips, can add a significant amount of unhealthy calories.

Yogurt

- Look for those with more than 20% DV for calcium.

Spreads (Cream Cheese, Nut Butters, Margarine/Butter)

- Use smaller portions.
- Peanut and other nut butters are a good source of healthy fats and protein.

Fruits & Vegetables

- Fresh, frozen and canned produce are all great options to increase the micronutrient profile of your meals. Choose what you like and have access to.

Fruit Juice, Lemonade, Tea, Soft Drinks, Energy Drinks

- Choose “100%” juice.
- Avoid drinks with more than 100% DV of vitamins or minerals.

Sports/Energy/Protein Bars

- Look for whole foods as the first two to three foods in the ingredient list.

Other Snack Foods

- Chips, crackers, puffs, sweets and similar snacks are best eaten in small amounts.
- Baked snack varieties are generally lower in fat but may be higher in added sugars and/or sodium.

