

The Lunch Box



Food labels can help you choose healthy foods for your child's lunch. Today's food labels provide information about ingredients and nutrient content. Read the ingredient and Nutrition Facts labels to get information you need to select healthy foods.



University of California
Cooperative Extension
San Luis Obispo County



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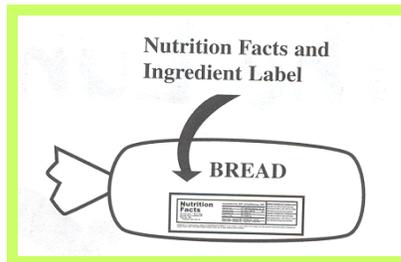


Ingredient Labels



Ingredient lists tell you what is really in the products you buy. By law, food packages must list all the ingredients in a product. This information is always printed on the outside of the package.

Food ingredients are listed according to the amount of each ingredient in the package. The ingredient that weighs the most is listed first, and the ingredient that weighs the least is listed last.



Here's an example:

Take a look at this ingredient label from a loaf of **whole wheat bread**:

The main ingredients are: **Whole** Wheat Flour, Water, Wheat Gluten, Brown Sugar, Molasses, Soybean Oil, Honey, Yeast, Salt, Cultured Wheat Starch, Oats, Soy Flour, Dough Conditioners.

Compare this ingredient list from a **wheat bread** label:

The main ingredients are: **Enriched** Wheat Flour, Water, High Fructose Corn Syrup, Wheat Bran, Soybean Oil, Molasses, Wheat Gluten, Salt, Whey, Calcium Sulfate, Dough Conditioners.

If you want a whole grain bread, which loaf would you choose?

You would most likely choose the first loaf as it is made mainly of whole wheat flour. The second loaf contains mostly enriched wheat flour, which is commonly known as white flour.

Some wheat breads do contain a small amount of whole grain flour. The whole grain flour is usually listed as the third or fourth ingredient, which means that only a small amount has been added to the loaf.

Hint: When the ingredient list is very long, the first two or three ingredients will usually make up most of the product.

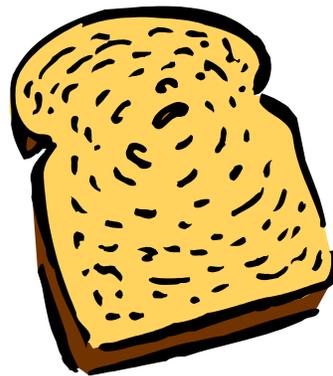
Confused about Whole Wheat Verses Wheat?



Whole wheat bread has the entire wheat kernel and all the nutrients that naturally occur in wheat, including fiber and micronutrients. The natural color of the wheat kernel contributes to the brown coloring of the bread.

Wheat bread contains mainly enriched white flour. Only part of the wheat kernel is used to make this flour. This flour has been enriched to replace the major nutrients lost during milling. The minor nutrients and fiber are not replaced. The brown color of wheat bread comes from an added coloring, such as molasses.

Today's nutrition experts recommend eating more whole grains to increase dietary fiber. Diets high in fiber may help reduce the risk of some types of cancers and can help lower cholesterol levels.





Is it Fruit Juice or a Fruit Drink?



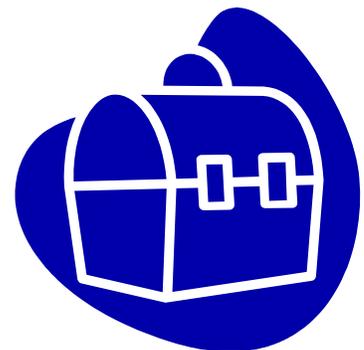
Is that beverage fruit juice or is it an imitation fruit drink?
Use the labels to find out.

A juice product that states “100% juice” is made only from fruit juice.
This product will contain the nutrients that naturally occur in the fruit.

Fruit drinks, fruit-ades, and fruit punches are made mainly of sugar and water.
Read the label to learn how much juice is in the product.
Most fruit drinks contain less than 10% juice.
Fruit drinks maybe fortified with one or two of the major vitamins,
but they do not have all the nutrients found in real juices.

Healthy Sounding Names

Many foods have healthy sounding names. Products like fruit bits, fruit rolls, or fruit snacks sound like they are fruit. But, they are really a form of candy made mainly of sugar with a small amount of fruit juice concentrate. Don't be fooled by these product names—put real fruit instead of fruit snacks in your child's lunch.



A Granola Bar or A Candy Bar?



Here are the first few ingredients on a food label:

Milk Chocolate (made from Sugar, Cocoa Butter, Chocolate, Lactose, Skim Milk, Milkfat, Soy Lecithin, Artificial Flavor), Peanuts, Corn Syrup, Sugar...

Is this label from a granola bar or a candy bar? It's from a candy bar.



These are the first 5 ingredients of another product:

Milk Chocolate (made from Sugar, Cocoa Butter, Chocolate, Lactose, Skim Milk, Milkfat, Soy Lecithin, Vanillin), Peanuts, Corn Syrup, Sugar, Milk...

Is this label from a granola bar or a candy bar? It's a granola bar.

Many granola bars have ingredients similar to candy bars. Nutritionally speaking, most granola bars and candy bars offer calories mainly from fat and sugar, but little in the way of other nutrients.





Nutrition Facts Label

The Nutrition Facts label can also help you select healthy foods. This label states the nutritional value in a serving of the product. And it shows how this food fits into the overall daily diet. For each serving of the product, the label gives the:

- *Serving size
- *Amount of fat, cholesterol, and sodium
- *Amount of carbohydrates, including fiber and sugar
- *Amount of protein
- *Amount this food provides of the daily needs for vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron (*some labels list additional nutrients in this section*).

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (114g)	
Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 30
%Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g 0%	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 13g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g 12%	
Sugars 3g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 80%	* Vitamin C 60%
Calcium 4%	* Iron 10%

The Nutrition Facts label makes it easy to compare two or more products. Let's look at how the Nutrition Facts label can be used to choose a lower fat alternative to potato chips:

Regular Potato Chips

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 30g (about 20 chips)	
Servings Per Container 6	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 160	Calories from Fat 100
%Daily Value*	
Total Fat 11g	17%
Saturated Fat 0g 18%	

Baked Potato Chips

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1oz. (28g/about 10 chips)	
Servings Per Container About 6	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 120	Calories from Fat 30
%Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g 0%	

Mini Pretzel Twists

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 22 pieces (28g)	
Servings Per Container About 15	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 110	Calories from Fat 10
%Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g 0%	

The Nutrition Facts indicate one serving of each product is a similar size—28-30 grams.

- *This serving size of Regular Potato Chips has 160 calories and 11 grams of fat.
- *A similar serving size for Baked Potato Chips has 120 calories and only 3 grams of fat.
- *A serving of the Mini Pretzel Twists has 110 calories and 1 gram of fat.



%Daily Value

The Percent Daily Value (%Daily Value) column shows whether a food is high or low in nutrients. A 5% Daily Value or less means that the food provides a small amount of the nutrient. A food with a 20% Daily Value or more gives a large amount of the nutrient.

Use %Daily Value to select foods low in fats, cholesterol, and sodium and to select foods high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

A Quick Guide to %Daily Value
 5% or less is low
 20% or more is high

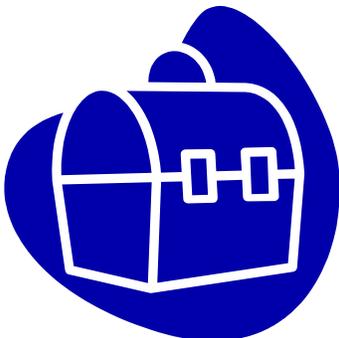
Note: Although this label is based on adult needs, it can be used as a general guide for small children.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1/2 cup (114g)	
Servings Per Container 4	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 30
%Daily Value*	
Total Fat 3g	5%
Saturated Fat 0g 0%	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	13%
Total Carbohydrate 13g	4%
Dietary Fiber 3g 12%	
Sugars 3g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 80%	* Vitamin C 60%
Calcium 4%	* Iron 10%

Healthy Lunch Ideas

½ Tuna & Cheese Sandwich on Whole Wheat Bread
(made with reduced fat mayonnaise)
 Mini Pretzels
 100% Orange Juice

Unsweetened Ready-to Eat Cereal
 Low-Fat Milk
 ½ Banana
 Fresh Green Beans
 Water



Homemade Trail Mix*
 Carrot Sticks
 Low-Fat Milk

Homemade Trail Mix*

- 1/4 Cup toasted oat cereal
- 2 Tablespoons raisins or chopped dried fruit
- 1 Tablespoon sunflower seeds
- 5 pretzel sticks

Place all ingredients in a baggie.
 Seal the bag and shake.



Did You Know?

Sugar goes by many names. Ingredient labels may list sugar in these ways:

Corn Syrup
Honey
Corn Sweeteners
Molasses
High Fructose Corn Syrup
Natural Sweetener
Invert Sugar
Malto-dextrin
Any ingredient name ending in “-ose”
(such as dextrose, lactose, or fructose)



How many sugars are in the following ingredient list?

Unbleached Wheat Flour, Butter, Sugar, Corn Syrup, Eggs, Dextrose,
Non-fat Milk, Baking Soda, Cream of Tartar.

(Answer: Sugar, Corn Syrup, Dextrose)



More Information

More information on understanding and using food labels can be found at
<http://www.v.m.cfsan.fda.gov/label.html>

The Lunch Box is a series of handouts designed for San Luis Obispo County parents who pack lunches for their preschool children. The goal of these handouts is to assist parents in packing lunches that are nutritious, safe and appealing for preschool children.

The author acknowledges the cooperation of nine San Luis Obispo County preschools that assisted in the development of the Lunch Box program.

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Designed by Cheryl May.

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