Make Sense of Food Labels

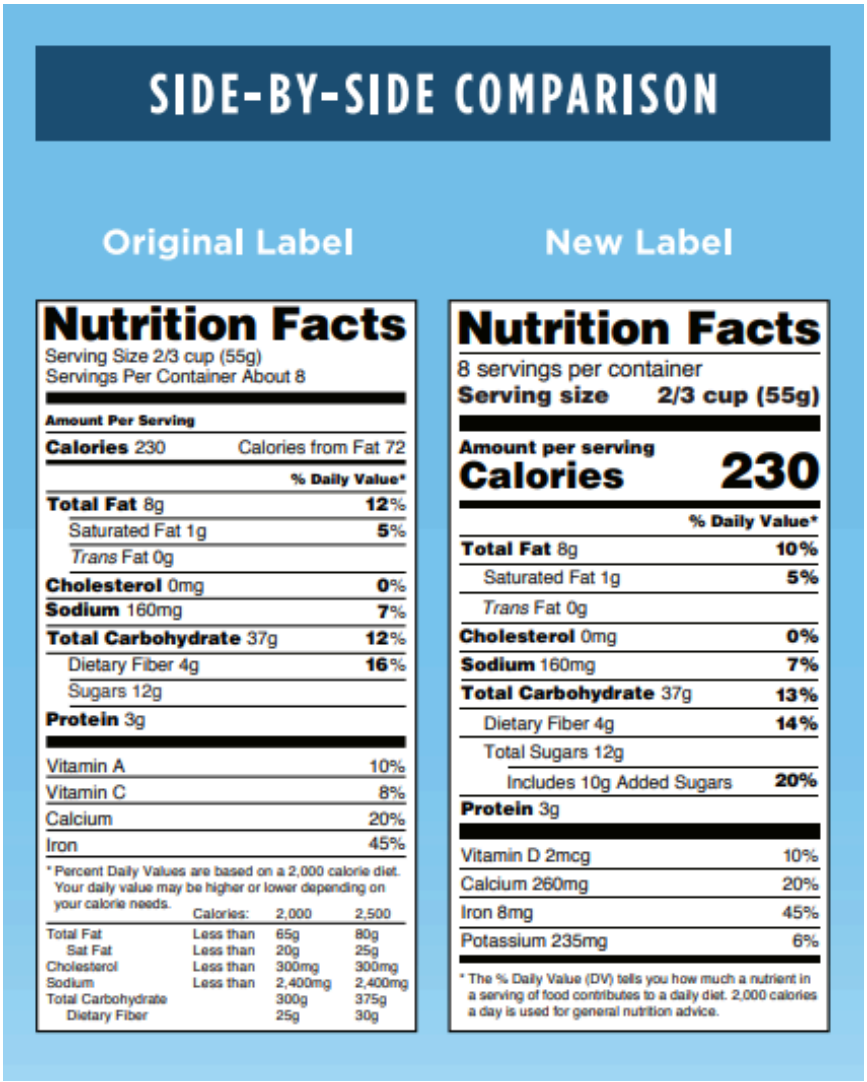
Reading food labels is an important step in understanding how many calories you're consuming. Accurately recognizing serving size, calories, as well as nutrients to limit and those to increase, will help you understand how to make healthy food choices as you improve your whole body health.

In this graphic, you see two versions of the label. All manufacturers will be required to carry the new label by January 2021.

1. Serving Size

Start by looking at the serving size. All the other facts on the label are based on this amount of food.

Also look at the number of servings in the package. This package contains eight servings. So if you eat the whole package, you'll need to multiply all the other facts on the label by eight. Compare the serving size you eat with the size listed on the label.



Source: FDA.gov

Other ways to find out nutrition facts:

- Computer apps
- Smartphone apps
- Websites
- Food manufacturer websites
- Restaurant website - for many chain restaurants

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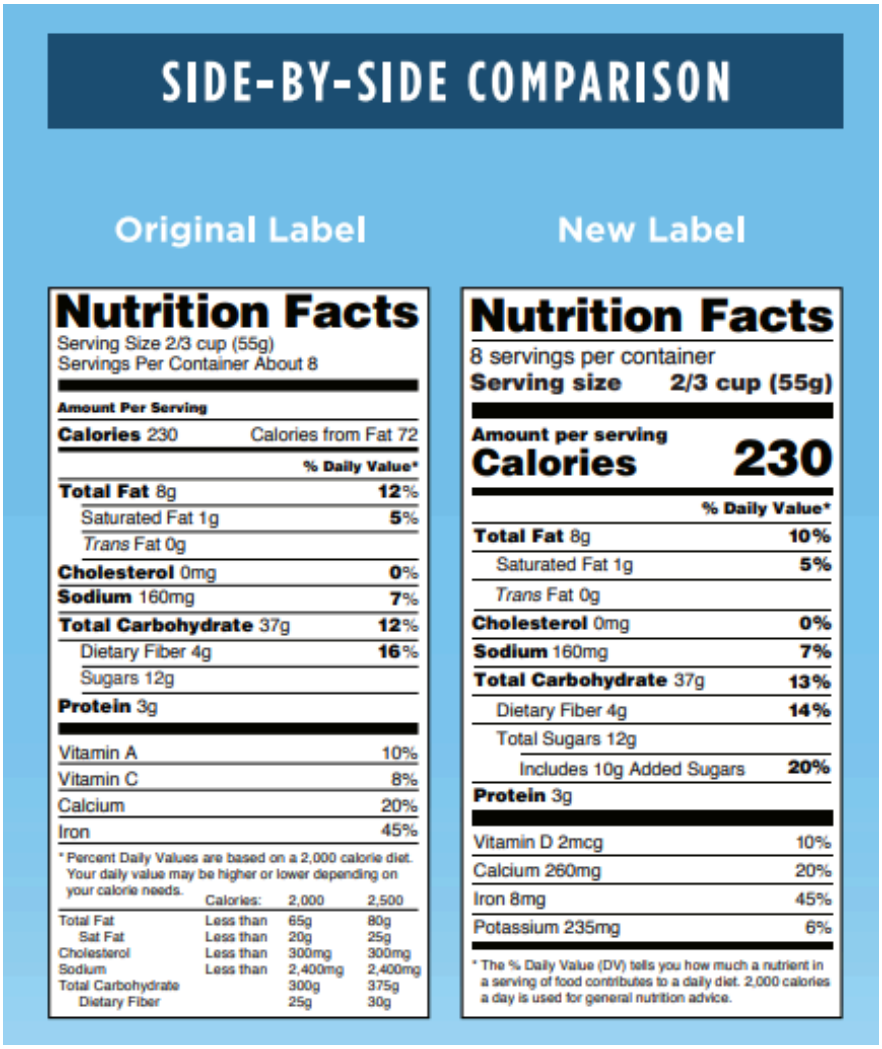
2. Calories

Knowing the calories can help you reach or stay at a healthy weight. The calories are the amount of energy you get from a serving of this food. Many Americans consume more calories than they need. Try to get fewer than 30 percent of your calories from fat.

3. Limit These Nutrients

- Fat
- Saturated fat
- Trans fat
- cholesterol
- Sodium
- Added Sugar

Eating too much of these nutrients can raise your risk of certain health problems, including heart disease, some cancers, and high blood pressure. A product with 5% or less daily value is considered “low” in that nutrient.



4. Get Enough of These Nutrients

- Fiber
- Vitamins (such as vitamin A, C and D)
- Minerals (such as calcium, iron and potassium)

Eating enough of these nutrients can improve your health and lower your risk of certain health problems. For instance, getting enough calcium can help strengthen your bones and teeth. Eating plenty of fiber can help you lose weight, lower your cholesterol, and manage your blood sugar. A product with 20% or more daily value is considered “high” in that nutrient.

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5. Check the Ingredients List
The list of ingredients can also help you make good food choices. Look for products with a short list of “real food” ingredients that you recognize. This means the food is less processed.