

Nutrition Facts: Reading the Label

Reading labels can help you make smart food choices. Processed and packaged foods and drinks—you'll find them in cans, boxes, bottles, jars, and bags—have a lot of information on their labels or packaging about nutrition and food safety.

Product dates. You might see one of three types of product dates on the foods you buy:

- “Sell by” tells you how long the store can sell foods like meat, poultry, eggs, or milk products. Buy them before this date.
- “Use by” tells you how long the food will be at peak quality. If you buy or use them after that date, some foods might not be safe any longer.
- “Best if used by” (or “best if used before”) tells you how long the food has the best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

Ingredients list. Ingredients in processed food are listed on the label from largest to smallest amount. That is, there's more of the first ingredient listed than any other ingredient.

Nutrition Facts Label. At the top of the Nutrition Facts label, you'll find how much is considered one serving of that food or drink and the number of servings in the container. All of the nutrition information on the label is for one serving.

Daily Value (DV) is how much of each nutrient most people need each day. The % DV says what part (as a percent) of the total daily recommendation for a nutrient is in a serving based on eating 2,000 calories each day.



Quick Tip

For more ideas on healthy eating, read *What's on Your Plate? Smart Food Choices for Healthy Aging*.

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