There are nutritional labels everywhere. How do we know what to look for when reading these? What are some mistakes that all of us make from time to time? When reading labels, always start from the top! The first thing is serving size and probably the most important information of all. Many of us at times assume each container we purchase is just one serving. Maybe you looked at the label but missed that your soda or yogurt is actually a 2 serving container. Remember to use your math skills. Let’s Practice! If the **Serving Size** on the label example below is more than one, then multiple your facts on the label by that number. Do this for all the label information such as calories, fat, carbs and protein. If you ate the entire container of the pretend food on the label your totals would be 90x4=360 Calories, 3x4=12g Fat, 13x4=52g Carbs, and 3x4=12g Protein

3) **Pick lower Fat and Salt Items**: Trans Fats and Sodium(Salt) can cause real damage to your heart.

4) **Avoid High Carbohydrates and Sugars**: Watch out for hidden sugar. Aim for 10g or less per serving.

5) **Fiber is Key to a Healthy Diet**: Fiber should be around 3-5 grams or more per serving. (really high fiber can be hard to process, follow with water)

6) **Protein**, balancing this throughout the day is best. Aim for 20-30 grams at each meal. Plant proteins and dairy are sources that will help this goal.

7) **Do look for products loaded in Vitamins and Minerals**.

This is a lot to take in, so pick a few items to train your brain on, per week.

**Here are a few more Q & A’s on labels.**

**Question**: Do all foods have nutrition information?

**Answer**: No, foods that do not have caloric values are herbs, spices, vinegar and vinegar type liquids, coffee, and water. Also, often in grocery stores if products are created in house, they may not have nutritional information.

**Question**: What about the claims on the box?

**Answer**: When in doubt read the back. Often, the front is a form of marketing that will be confusing.

**Check out these websites for more info:**

[Understanding Labels](#)  [Nutrition Labels from Medline](#)

**Campus tips**: Need snacks on campus? Try visiting the Sam’s Place stores for products that you can add to any healthy plan. Items such as nut bars, yogurts, oatmeal, almonds, fruit cups and fresh fruit are there for convenient purchases. Practice these label reading tips.
**TTU Faculty Fitness Challenge 2015**

**MORE TIPS ON LABEL READING:**

### Use the Nutrition Facts Label to Eat Healthier

Check the serving size and number of servings.
- The Nutrition Facts Label information is based on ONE serving, but many packages contain more. Look at the serving size and how many servings you are actually consuming. If you double the servings you eat, you double the calories and nutrients, including the % DVs.
- When you compare calories and nutrients between brands, check to see if the serving size is the same.

Calories count, so pay attention to the amount.
- This is where you’ll find the number of calories per serving and the calories from fat in each serving.
- Fat-free doesn’t mean calorie-free. Lower-fat items may have as many calories as full-fat versions.
- If the label lists that 1 serving equals 3 cookies and 100 calories, and you eat 6 cookies, you’ve eaten 2 servings, or twice the number of calories and fat.

Look for foods that are rich in these nutrients.
- Use the label not only to limit fat and sodium, but also to increase nutrients that promote good health and may protect you from disease.
- Some Americans don’t get enough vitamins A and C, potassium, calcium, and iron, so choose the brand with the higher % DV for these nutrients.
- Get the most nutrition for your calories—compare the calories to the nutrients you would be getting to make a healthier food choice.

### Nutrition Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size 1 cup (228g)</th>
<th>Servings Per Container 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amount Per Serving</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calories from Fat</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>12g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated Fat</td>
<td>3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trans Fat</td>
<td>3g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cholesterol</td>
<td>30mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sodium</td>
<td>470mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potassium</td>
<td>700mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carbohydrate</td>
<td>31g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dietary Fiber</td>
<td>0g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugars</td>
<td>5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protein</strong></td>
<td>5g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

### Why the % Daily Value is a Key to a Balanced Diet.

The % DV is a general guide to help you link nutrients in a serving of food to their contribution to your total daily diet. It can help you determine if a food is high or low in a nutrient—5% or less is low, 20% or more is high. You can use the % DV to make dietary trade-offs with other foods throughout the day. The % is a reminder that the % DV is based on a 2,000-calorie diet. You may need more or less, but the % DV is still a helpful gauge.

### Know Your Fats and Reduce Sodium for Your Health.
- To help reduce your risk of heart disease, use the label to select foods that are lowest in saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol.
- Trans fat doesn’t have a % DV but consume as little as possible because it increases your risk of heart disease.
- The % DV for total fat includes all different kinds of fats.
- To help lower blood cholesterol, replace saturated and trans fats with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats found in fish, nuts, and liquid vegetable oils.
- Limit sodium to help reduce your risk of high blood pressure.

### Reach for Healthy, Wholesome Carbohydrates.
- Fiber and sugars are types of carbohydrates. Healthy sources, like fruits, vegetables, beans, and whole grains, can reduce the risk of heart disease and improve digestive functioning.
- Whole grain foods can’t always be identified by color or name, such as multi-grain or wheat. Look for the "whole" grain listed first in the ingredient list, such as whole wheat, brown rice, or whole oats.
- There isn’t a % DV for sugar, but you can compare the sugar content in grams among products.
- Limit foods with added sugars (sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn or maple syrup), which add calories but not other nutrients, such as vitamins and minerals. Make sure that added sugars are not one of the first few items in the ingredients list.

### For Protein, Choose Foods that are Lower in Fat.
- Most Americans get plenty of protein, but not always from the healthiest sources.
- When choosing a food for its protein content, such as meat, poultry, dry beans, milk, and milk products, make choices that are lean, low-fat, or fat-free.