

It seems like everyone is claiming to be a fitness or nutrition expert these days. There is so much information out there, how do you separate the good from the bad? Today's lesson includes a simple strategy for making judgments about the nutritional quality of what you buy at the grocery store. Knowing how to read a food label is essential to seeing past flashy marketing campaigns and determining what is truly a healthy product.

## Is choosing fat-free always best?

Many vitamins need the presence of fat so they can be absorbed and do their job. But there's more to it than that. In order to maintain a comparable product, manufacturers often replace the fat they removed with added sugar. If you are choosing a fat-free product, be sure to also compare its sugar content with a similar product that contains fat. You may be surprised to find out which one has less sugar in it.

## What's the deal with added sugar and sodium?

When it comes to eating healthfully, the closer you can get to the real thing the better. In the case of many processed and pre-packaged foods, manufacturers need to add salt and/or sugar to maintain their freshness and increase their shelf life. Stick to products in their most natural form, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole-grain products, lean meats, and low-fat dairy to avoid unnecessary consumption of these additives.

## How do I read the ingredient list?

First of all, it is important to note that the ingredient listed first is going to be present in the highest amount. The remaining ingredients are then listed in decreasing order. Run all of your products through this test before purchasing to ensure nutritional quality. Is sugar the first ingredient? If so, pass on the product. It likely offers few nutrients but lots of calories.

### Words to watch

- High fructose corn syrup = sugar
- Partially hydrogenated = trans fats
- Enriched flour = not a whole grain, no matter what the front of the package claims

Ingredients: **Enriched flour** (wheat flour), niacin, reduced iron, thiamine, mononitrate (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B1), folic acid, **partially hydrogenated** soybean oil, sugar, **high fructose corn syrup**, leavening (baking soda), calcium phosphate ...

## What makes a product organic?

It must contain 70 percent organically produced ingredients to be labeled as USDA Organic. However, keep in mind that organic products are not necessarily healthier than non-organic foods. They are just produced without the use of irradiation, sewage, and genetic engineering. Organic products are not necessarily pesticide-free.



Additional information from K-State Research and Extension Human Nutrition can be found at [www.ksre.ksu.edu/humannutrition](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/humannutrition)

## What food label information matters most?

First, check out the number of servings listed on the label, paying special attention to the serving size. Some foods come packaged in pairs, yet the serving size is only for half that amount. Next, look at the amount of calories per serving. Then look at the fat (specifically saturated and trans fats), cholesterol, sugars, and sodium. You want these values to be low because a frequent intake of foods high in these items increases the risk for heart disease. Finally, look at the amount of fiber and the percentage of vitamins and minerals. High fiber is a good thing. Fiber, vitamins, and minerals boast numerous health benefits, and fiber will help keep you satisfied longer.

## Assignment: Compare food labels

Find two products in your pantry or at the grocery store and compare their nutritional quality by reading the food label. If possible, choose one highly processed product (boxed macaroni and cheese, chocolate chip cookies, etc.) and another product that is in a more natural state (low-fat yogurt, whole-grain bread, etc.). Record your observations in the space below. Be as specific as possible regarding serving size, calories, fat, cholesterol, sugars, sodium, fiber content, and any other relevant information. \_\_\_\_\_

Does either product contain any words that make a nutrient content claim (see list on back of last page)? List them here. \_\_\_\_\_

Which product do you think is “healthier” and why? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think you could modify either product to make it healthier (i.e. choosing a reduced-fat variety, low-sodium, etc.)? \_\_\_\_\_

Sample label for Macaroni & Cheese

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g) Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 3g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

① Start Here →

② Check Calories

③ Limit these Nutrients

④ Get Enough of these Nutrients



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## Guide to aerobic exercise

It is one of the most commonly recurring questions in fitness: Which is better for my health, aerobic or strength training exercises? The answer is both. Aerobic exercise and strength training are both essential to leading a healthier, longer life. While they are equally important, they don't necessarily need to be accomplished in the same session.

### Why aerobic exercise should supplement strength training.

Aerobic exercise and strength training both help to burn calories. Aerobic exercise instantly burns calories, while strength training increases your ability to do so even after you have finished your workout. The two forms of exercise go hand in hand. For example, you could spend hours doing sit-ups or crunches, but you won't see any muscle definition unless you also use aerobic exercise to burn extra calories and diminish the amount of fat occupying that area.

### What are the benefits?

Regular aerobic exercise increases your cardiovascular fitness and endurance. It allows both your heart and lungs to work more efficiently, providing you with energy and stamina to complete daily tasks. If you are not used to physical activity, you may tire easily and become short of breath when walking up a flight of stairs or carrying a heavy sack of groceries to the car. Other benefits include an improved immune system, better mental health, and reduced risk of developing chronic diseases.

### Warm up and cool down.

Take 5 to 10 minutes at the beginning and end of each session to warm up and cool down. This will gradually get your body ready to challenge itself and allow it to recover from your activity. Use the warm-up and cool-down time for stretching, walking at a slower pace, and other techniques.

### Start small.

According to the American College of Sports Medicine, "You should always be able to catch your breath and speak comfortably while exercising. It is also normal to sense effort, and maybe even discomfort, but you should never sense pain." Don't overwork yourself. Know your limits and stop if you feel pain. Make small steps toward increasing your goals (length of time, speed, etc.) over time.



*This week's Move Into Health action plan*



# Understanding Nutrient Content Claims

- **Free.** This term means that a product contains no amount of, or only trivial amounts of, one or more of these components: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugars, and calories. For example, “calorie-free” means fewer than 5 calories per serving, and “sugar-free” and “fat-free” both mean less than 0.5 g per serving. Synonyms for “free” include “without,” “no,” and “zero.”
- **Low.** This term can be used on foods that can be eaten frequently without exceeding dietary guidelines for one or more of these components: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and calories.
  - low fat: 3 g or less per serving
  - low saturated fat: 1 g or less per serving
  - low sodium: 140 mg or less per serving
  - very low sodium: 35 mg or less per serving
  - low cholesterol: 20 mg or less and 2 g or less of saturated fat per serving
  - low calorie: 40 calories or less per serving.
- **High.** This term can be used if the food contains 20 percent or more of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient in a serving.
- **Good source.** This term means that one serving of a food contains 10 percent to 19 percent of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient.
- **Reduced.** This term means that a product contains at least 25 percent less of a nutrient or of calories than the regular product.
- **Less.** This term means that a food contains 25 percent less of a nutrient or of calories than the reference food. For example, pretzels that have 25 percent less fat than potato chips could carry a “less” claim. “Fewer” is an acceptable synonym.
- **Light.** This can mean two things:
  - First, that a product contains one-third fewer calories or half the fat of the reference food. If the food derives 50 percent or more of its calories from fat, the reduction must be 50 percent of the fat.
  - Second, that the sodium content of a low-calorie, low-fat food has been reduced by 50 percent. In addition, “light in sodium” may be used on food in which the sodium content has been reduced by at least 50 percent.
- **More.** This term means that a serving of food contains a nutrient that is at least 10 percent of the Daily Value more than the reference food. The 10 percent of Daily Value also applies to “fortified,” “enriched,” “added,” “extra,” and “plus” claims, but in those cases, the food must be altered.

*Adapted from <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fdnewlab.html>*



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