



Shape Up Your Workplace

A monthly series brought to you by Get Healthy CT

Workplace Wellness Idea #17: How to Read Nutrition Labels

Get Healthy CT aims to provide businesses with ideas that will help facilitate healthy behavior change in their employees to improve employee satisfaction, increase productivity and showcase the employer as a role model for health. To support this, we will provide a “Workplace Wellness Idea” each month that employers can implement at low or no cost.

As an employer, you care about the well-being of your employees. Many people want to start eating healthier but do not know where to begin. You can help your employees by educating them on “how to read the nutrition facts on labels” information. Your employees can use these tips to effectively and easily make well-informed food choices.

How to Read Nutrition Labels

Most people are aware that too much fat, cholesterol and sodium are not good for them, but they simply need help learning how to select the best food options to make their diets healthier. The supermarket aisles are packed with appealing titles – low fat, reduced calorie, low carb – but how do you choose the healthiest option? First, turn the package over and look at the “nutrition facts panel,” which the Food and Drug Administration requires on almost all food items except for meats. Be sure to pay close attention to the serving size amount, total calories, calories from fat, nutrients, vitamins and percent daily value (%DV) of each. If you can choose between different brands of the same product, compare labels to select the brand with the healthiest ingredients.

Reading nutrition labels on packages can be time consuming initially. However, once you learn how to read labels and identify the most nutritious products, you will know what to choose on your next shopping trip, and this will save you time as you improve your eating habits.

Some simple guidelines from the American Heart Association can be found on the next page. These are intended to make it easier for you to use nutrition labels to make quick, informed food choices that contribute to a healthy diet.

For more information, please visit GetHealthyCT.org

Let's work together to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in the workplace!

Learn to Read Nutrition Facts Labels

Start here. A **serving** is the amount of that food or beverage the information on the label is describing. A general rule of thumb is to eat ONE serving during a single meal or snack. The label will also tell you how many servings are in the package. If the label says there are two servings in the package, that's a hint that you may only want to only eat half of that package or share it with a friend.

Check total number of calories per serving. Once you see the serving size and how many servings are in the package, you can figure out how many calories are in the food you're eating. If you eat two servings that means you have to multiply the calories by 2.

Limit foods that have high amounts of certain nutrients. If the label says the food has lots of unhealthy fats (like saturated and trans fats) you might want

to pick something else. Also try to limit foods that are high in cholesterol, sodium, sugar, or are higher in calories than similar foods or beverages. Making good decisions about what you eat often requires comparing the labels of different foods and finding the best option.

Quick guide to % DV (Daily Value). The % DV section tells you the percent of each nutrient that a single serving of the food gives you compared to the amount that most people should eat in a day. You want to consume lower percentages of saturated fat, cholesterol or sodium; so choose foods with a low % DV, like 5 percent or less. You want to consume more of nutrients such as fiber or vitamins and minerals; so choose foods with a higher % DV — like 20 percent or more.

Get the right amount of certain healthy foods and nutrients. Your body functions best when it gets the right amounts of foods that provide the fiber, vitamins and other nutrients your body needs to function at its best.

Start here

Check the total calories per serving

Limit these nutrients

Get enough of these nutrients

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

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 slice (47g)
Servings Per Container 6

Amount Per Serving

Calories 160 Calories from Fat 90

| | | % Daily Value* |
|---------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Total Fat | 10g | 15% |
| Saturated Fat | 2.5g | 11% |
| Trans Fat | 2g | |
| Cholesterol | 0mg | 0% |
| Sodium | 300mg | 12% |
| Total Carbohydrate | 15g | 5% |
| Dietary Fiber | less than 1g | 3% |
| Sugars | 1g | |
| Protein | 3g | |
| Vitamin A | 0% | Vitamin C 4% |
| Calcium | 45% | Iron 6% |
| Thiamin | 8% | Riboflavin 6% |
| Niacin | 6% | |

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

A serving size? A portion size? I'm confused. A "serving" is the amount of food recommended to keep your body healthy. A "portion" is the amount of a food you eat at any one time — which may be more or less than a serving. Try keeping your portion sizes close to one serving for each meal!