

# Activity:

# Food Labels and Serving Sizes

## Overview

In this activity, participants will learn about recommended serving sizes and nutritional benefits for some of their favorite foods.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of the activity, participants will be able to:

- Read Nutrition Facts labels to understand the properties of that food.
- Determine the recommended serving of a food item.
- Understand the importance of following recommendations for serving sizes and choosing foods based on their nutritional qualities.

## Audience

5<sup>th</sup> grade to adult

## Materials

- *Food Labels and Serving Sizes* handout (included with this lesson)
- *Nutrition Label Guide* handout (included with this lesson)
- Copies of Nutrition Facts labels for various foods
- Several different packaged food items (like popcorn, cereal or granola) or, to avoid using real food, you can stuff boxes and bags of discarded/eaten food with other materials (like packing foam “peanuts” or shredded paper) to represent the food items
- Different sized bowls
- Measuring cups
- Pens/pencils

## Duration

20 minutes

## Activity Preparation

Print out enough of the *Food Labels and Serving Sizes* handout for each participant to have their own and make copies of Nutrition Facts labels for various foods that each group can share. Place several different sized bowls at each table into which participants can pour the food items and put a packaged food item (like a box of cereal or bag of popcorn) or food item representative (like a box of shredded paper to represent cereal) at each table along with a measuring cup.

# Activity: Food Labels and Serving Sizes



## Instructions

1. Begin this activity with a discussion about the importance of paying attention to Nutrition Facts labels and serving sizes as a part of a healthy diet, asking some or all of the following questions:
  - What are some of your favorite snack foods?
  - How much do you typically eat in one sitting?
  - Is your favorite food healthy? What do you think makes it healthy? Is there any aspect of it that could make it unhealthy? [Example: Popcorn is a popular snack that can be healthy in moderation since it's a whole grain food. However, it can turn into an unhealthy snack if loaded up with salt and butter.]
2. Separate participants into small groups of 4-5 people and have each group sit at a table, on which they will find a food item, several different sized bowls, a measuring cup, a *Food Labels and Serving Sizes* handout for each participant and copies of Nutrition Facts labels for various foods.
3. Read aloud the directions at the top of the *Food Labels and Serving Sizes* handout and instruct participants to fill out the front page of the handout based on the amount of food they would each normally eat versus the recommended serving size.
4. Using the copies of Nutrition Facts labels of various foods, have participants fill in the Nutrition Facts label on the back of the handout for a more in-depth examination of the information that can be found here and how that information can be used to assess whether a food item is a healthy choice. As they complete the handout, reference the *Nutrition Label Guide* handout to facilitate a discussion on what each part of the label means and about the elements of a Nutrition Facts label to which the participants should pay particular attention.

## Evaluation

- Collect handout and check for completeness/accuracy.

**Adapted from:** "The Science of Food and Fitness," Baylor College of Medicine, 2006.

## Food Labels and Serving Sizes

Directions:

1. Put the amount of food you would eat into the bowl or cup. Pick the size bowl/ cup that you would usually use for this food at home.
2. Take the measuring cup and measure how much you put into your bowl as you pour the food back in the box. Write the answer on this paper below. **You can do this individually or as a group, if you all agree on the same amount of food.**
3. Read the **Nutrition Facts Label** on the box to determine how much is in one (1) recommended serving. Write the answer on this paper below.

Food item: \_\_\_\_\_

Person's Name	Amount you would eat	Recommended serving

\*In your group, who came closest to pouring in the recommended serving size that's on the Nutrition Facts Label?

\_\_\_\_\_

\*Are members of your group getting more, less, or about the same amount of recommended servings of this food?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Nutrition Facts

Use your Nutrition Facts Label to fill in the chart and answer the questions. See if your food is a healthy choice.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>	
Serving Size	<input type="text"/>
Servings Per Container	<input type="text"/>
<b>Amount per Serving</b>	
Calories	<input type="text"/> Calories from Fat <input type="text"/>
<b>% Daily Value</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b>	<input type="text"/> g <input type="text"/> %
<b>Saturated Fat</b>	<input type="text"/> g <input type="text"/> %
<b>Cholesterol</b>	<input type="text"/> mg <input type="text"/> %
<b>Sodium</b>	<input type="text"/> mg <input type="text"/> %
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	<input type="text"/> g <input type="text"/> %
<b>Dietary Fiber</b>	<input type="text"/> g <input type="text"/> %
<b>Sugars</b>	<input type="text"/> g
<b>Protein</b>	<input type="text"/> g
<b>Vitamin A</b>	<input type="text"/> %
<b>Vitamin C</b>	<input type="text"/> %
<b>Calcium</b>	<input type="text"/> %
<b>Iron</b>	<input type="text"/> %

Adapted from "The Science of Food and Fitness," Baylor College of Medicine, 2006.

## Nutrition Label Guide

Sample label for  
Macaroni & Cheese

# Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)  
Servings Per Container 2

1 **Start Here** →

**Amount Per Serving**

<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
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2 **Check Calories**

	% Daily Value*
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	<b>18%</b>
Saturated Fat 3g	<b>15%</b>
Trans Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	<b>10%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	<b>10%</b>

3 **Limit these Nutrients**

6

Quick Guide  
to % DV

Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
<b>Protein</b> 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

4 **Get Enough of these Nutrients**

• 5% or less  
is Low

• 20% or more  
is High

5 **Footnote**

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

		Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

[Source: US Food and Drug Administration]