

Reading Food Labels

Use the label to guide your food choices.

Watch out!

The amounts on the label are based on just one serving. Ask yourself, "How many servings am I eating?"

You may see lots of words on the front of the package that make you think a food is healthy, like "good source of Vitamin D" or "low fat." Always check the Nutrition Facts panel to be sure you get the whole story.

Calories tell you how much energy you get from one serving. Make sure calories fit within your energy needs for the day.

Aim low on "unhealthy fats." When comparing foods, look for less saturated fat and no trans fat.

When comparing foods, look for less sodium.

When comparing foods, look for more fiber and less sugar.

The %DV tells you if a food is high or low in a certain nutrient. 20% or more is high, 5% or less is low.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 1/4 cups

Servings Per Recipe 6

Amount Per Serving

Calories 220 **Calories from Fat 40**

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 4.5g **6%**

Saturated Fat 0.5g **3%**

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 15mg **5%**

Sodium 470mg **20%**

Total Carbohydrate 40g **15%**

Dietary Fiber 7g **25%**

Sugars 5g

Protein 8g

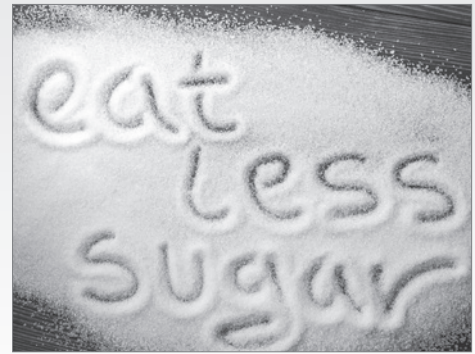
Vitamin A 20% • Vitamin C 60%

Calcium 4% • Iron 10%

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

Cut Back on Added Sugar

Less added sugar means more room for healthy foods!



Be a sugar detective.

Added sugar is added by the manufacturer during processing. Check the ingredient list. If these names for added sugars are on the list, it means the food or drink has added sugar.

- Brown sugar
- Corn sweetener
- Corn syrup
- Dextrose
- Fructose
- Glucose
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Invert sugar
- Lactose
- Malt syrup
- Maltose
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- Sucrose
- Trehalose
- Turbinado sugar

You may see **Sugars** or **added sugar** on the Nutrition Facts label.

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Compare Labels

Sugars includes both added sugars and natural sugars. Healthy foods like fruit, 100% juice, plain milk and yogurt, and vegetables contain sugar naturally. These are not added sugars.

You can compare the amount of sugars on the label for two similar products (like two brands of strawberry yogurt). If the products have similar ingredients, the brand lower in sugars probably has less added sugar.

Continued >

Cut Back on Added Sugar continued >

Add less sugar to what you eat and drink.

Leave it out or limit how much sugar, honey, and syrup you put on foods and in drinks.

Try healthier swaps for foods high in added sugar.

Watch out for added sugars in these foods:	Try these instead:
Desserts (like candy, cookies, cake, and ice cream)	Fruit-based desserts with less added sugar like Fruit Tarts on page 155 or Banana Crumble on page 153. For a more low-key, weeknight dessert, serve fresh, frozen, or canned fruit, or try Fruit Salad on page 93.
Sugary cereal or flavored yogurt	Add fruit to unsweetened cereal or plain yogurt. Try Yogurt Parfaits on page 119.
Drinks with added sugar (like soda, energy drinks, sports drinks, fruit drinks, sweetened coffee or tea, and chocolate milk)	Water, unflavored low-fat or fat-free milk, or small portions of 100% juice. Try mixing seltzer water with 100% juice or flavoring tap water with fruit slices and herbs.
Fruit canned in syrup or sweetened applesauce	Fruit canned in 100% juice or no sugar added applesauce. Or, try making your own applesauce with fresh apples, water, and a little cinnamon.
Jams, syrups, and sweet toppings	Instead of pancakes with syrup, try Orange Oatmeal Pancakes on page 116 and skip the syrup or just use a little. Instead of peanut butter and jelly, try peanut butter with apples or bananas.
Convenience and prepackaged foods like pizza, pasta sauce, bottled salad dressing, and crackers	Make your own pizza, pasta sauce, and salad dressing using the recipe for pizza on page 141, pasta sauce on page 142, and salad dressings on page 77. Look for whole grain crackers with no added sugar.



Know Your Fats

Fats and oils are vital to our health — but not all fats are created equal.



What you need to know about the fats we eat:

	Unsaturated	Saturated	Trans
Are these fats good for you?	Yes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lower “bad” cholesterol (LDL) • Lower your risk of heart disease and stroke • Provide fats your body needs, like omega-3 fatty acids 	No. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise your “bad” cholesterol (LDL) • Raise your risk of heart disease and stroke 	No. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise your “bad” cholesterol (LDL) • Lower your “good” cholesterol (HDL) • Raise your risk of heart disease and stroke
Which foods contain these fats?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable oils (like olive oil, canola oil, or sunflower oil) • Avocados • Peanut butter • Fatty fish • Many nuts and seeds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many animal foods (like fatty beef, poultry with skin, lard, cream, butter, cheese, and whole milk) • Baked goods • Fried foods • Coconut oil • Shortening and stick margarine 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some store-bought: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cakes • Cookies • Crackers • Icings • Margarines • Microwave popcorns • Frozen pizzas • Coffee creamers
How much should you eat each day?	Most of the fat you eat should be unsaturated.	Limit the amount of saturated fat you eat each day to less than 10% of your total calories (22 g for a 2,000 calorie diet). Choose unsaturated fats instead.	Avoid <i>trans</i> fats.

Use these steps to replace unhealthy fats with healthy fats:

- For protein, choose lean cuts of meat or poultry. Or, choose non-meat proteins like fish, beans, lentils, peanut butter, nuts, seeds, and soy products like tofu.
- Cook meats by roasting, grilling, or stir-frying. Avoid deep-frying.
- Read labels. Choose foods with less saturated fat and no *trans* fats.
- Read the ingredients list. Avoid foods that list “partially hydrogenated” oils.



Use this Checklist as a general guide.

- This food checklist is based on average needs. Do not be concerned if your child does not eat the exact amounts suggested. Your child may need more or less than average. For example, food needs increase during growth spurts.
- Children's appetites vary from day to day. Some days they may eat less than these amounts; other days they may want more. Let your child choose how much to eat. Throughout a day, offer amounts shown below.

Food group	2 year olds	3 year olds	4 and 5 year olds	What counts as:
Fruits Focus on whole fruits 	1 cup	1 – 1½ cups	1 – 1½ cups	½ cup of fruit? ½ cup mashed, sliced, or chopped fruit ½ cup 100% fruit juice ½ small banana 4-5 large strawberries
Vegetables Vary your veggies 	1 cup	1 – 1½ cups	1½ – 2 cups	½ cup of veggies? ½ cup mashed, sliced, or chopped vegetables 1 cup raw leafy greens ½ cup vegetable juice 1 small ear of corn
Grains Make half your grains whole grains 	3 ounces	3 – 5 ounces	4 – 5 ounces	1 ounce of grains? 1 slice bread 1 cup ready-to-eat cereal flakes ½ cup cooked oatmeal, rice, or pasta 1 tortilla (6" across)
Protein Foods Vary your protein routine 	2 ounces	2 – 4 ounces	3 – 5 ounces	1 ounce of protein foods? 1 ounce cooked meat, poultry, or seafood 1 egg 1 Tablespoon peanut butter ¼ cup cooked beans or peas (kidney, pinto, lentils)
Dairy Choose low-fat or fat-free milk or yogurt 	2 cups	2 – 2½ cups	2½ cups	½ cup of dairy? ½ cup milk 4 ounces yogurt ¾ ounce cheese

Some foods are easy to choke on while eating. Children need to sit when eating. Foods like hot dogs, grapes, and raw carrots need to be cut into small pieces the size of a nickel. Be alert if serving 3- to 5-year-olds foods like popcorn, nuts, seeds, or other hard foods.

There are many ways to divide the Daily Food Checklist into meals and snacks. View the "Meal and Snack Patterns and Ideas" to see how these amounts might look on your preschooler's plate at www.ChooseMyPlate.gov/preschoolers-meal-and-snack-patterns.



Great Whole Grains

Use these clues to search out tasty whole grains.

The first ingredient should always be a whole grain.

You may see:

- Whole [name of grain, like wheat, rye, or oats]
- Whole grain [name of grain, like barley, flour, or cornmeal]
- Bulgur
- Buckwheat
- Millet
- Oatmeal or rolled oats
- Quinoa
- Brown rice
- Popcorn

Whole grains contain fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. They may reduce the risk of some diseases and help maintain a healthy weight.

Watch out for these common tricks.

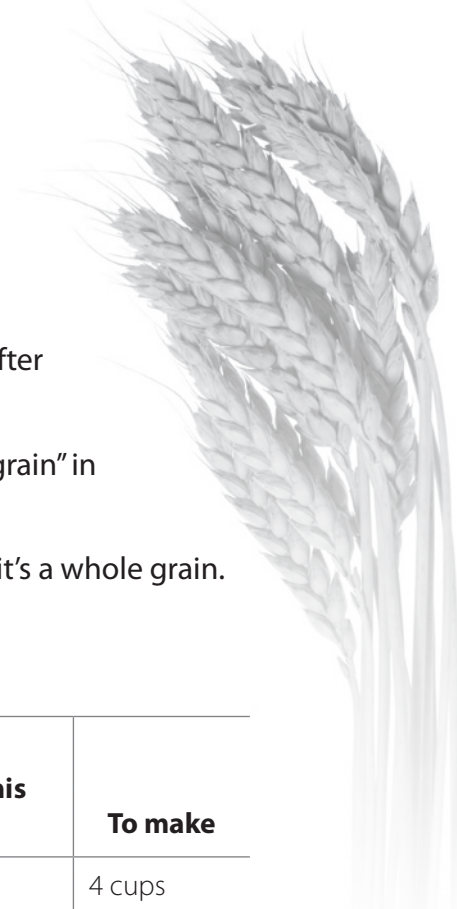
Don't be fooled by the other ingredients! Any whole grains listed after the first ingredient may only be a very small part of the product.

Don't be fooled by the name! Just because it says "wheat" or "multigrain" in the name doesn't mean it's a whole grain.

Don't be fooled by the color! Just because it's brown doesn't mean it's a whole grain.

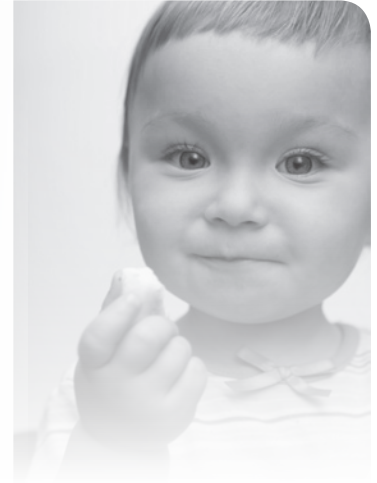
Cooking whole grains is easy! Use this chart as a guide.

To cook 1 cup of a whole grain...	Use this much broth or water	Bring to a boil and simmer for this amount of time	To make
Whole barley	3 cups	1½ hours	4 cups
Brown rice	2 cups	45 minutes	3 cups
Whole wheat couscous	1½ cups boiling liquid	5 minutes	2½ cups
Quick oats	3 cups	5 minutes	1¾ cups
Whole wheat pasta	4 cups	7-10 minutes	2½ cups
Quinoa (rinse well)	2 cups	15 minutes	4 cups
Wild rice	3 cups	45-60 minutes	2 cups



Snacks in a Snap

Let kids help you make tasty snacks* that will power them through the day.



Avocado Crunch

Let children mash 1 ripe avocado in a bowl. Add juice from half a lemon, 2 teaspoons of sunflower seeds, and a pinch of salt. Spread over Cucumber Sammies (right), or serve with vegetable slices or whole wheat crackers.

Cucumber Sammies

Cut cucumbers into 1/8-inch slices. Help children top with egg salad, tuna salad, Avocado Crunch (left), or turkey and cheese. Cover with another cucumber slice.

Baked Apples

Core apples and place in a microwave safe dish. Each child can fill their apple with about 1/2 teaspoon of butter, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Add a few raisins, if desired. Cook for about 6 minutes in the microwave. Allow to cool before serving with toasted whole wheat pita wedges dusted with cinnamon.

Kabobs

Cube different cheeses and slice a mixture of fruits. Invite children to make snack kabobs on coffee stirrer "skewers" or pretzel sticks.

Seasonal Fruit Salad

Let children help you wash and peel fruits that are in season. Cut into bite-size pieces. Combine in a large bowl. Squeeze the juice from half a lime over the fruit. Drizzle with a Tablespoon of honey if you like. Serve family-style with graham crackers.

Banana Crunch

Ask for help mashing one large, very ripe banana in a bowl. Add 1/4 to 1/3 cup of low-sugar granola, a dash of cinnamon, and mix. Spread onto thin wafers or graham crackers.

Roasted Vegetables

Preheat oven to 375°. Wash and cut several types of root veggies (beets, carrots, parsnips, sweet potatoes, turnips, etc.) lengthwise, into "fingers." Toss in a large bowl with 2 Tablespoons of canola oil, 1/2 teaspoon of salt, and 1/2 teaspoon of pepper. Place in a single layer on a baking sheet in preheated oven. Roast for 35-45 minutes, until tender. Serve over brown rice.

Smoothie

Have children help add ingredients to a blender. Use 6 ounces low-fat milk, 2/3 cup of frozen fruit, and 1/2 teaspoon of honey, if you like. Little fingers can press buttons to be sure everything is blended well. Pour and serve with whole oat granola bars.

*Snacks are for kids aged 2 and older. Adjust the ingredients as needed so that each child receives the age-appropriate amount to meet CACFP requirements.

Activity: Your Veggies, Your Way

Time to Implement:

15 minutes

Materials:

- Two medium carrots per person
- Large pot
- Wooden spoon
- Colander
- Five small bowls
- Five bunches of fresh herbs, all different types (e.g., rosemary, basil, dill, sage, cilantro, mint, oregano, parsley, etc.)
- 5 index cards
- 1-2 Tablespoons butter or canola oil
- Stickers
- Plates and cutlery for each person

TIP: Add ideas as appropriate for finding low-priced herbs. Or, suggest growing them in a home garden, in a small container outside, or on a window sill.

In Advance

1. Bring a pot of water to boil. Rinse and slice the carrots.
2. Label individual index cards according to the five herbs chosen for this activity.
3. Chop the herbs, keeping each chopped herb in a separate bowl. Place an index card with the name of the corresponding herb in front of each bowl.
4. When the water is boiling, add carrot slices to the pot. Cook to desired tenderness.
5. Drain, then add a small amount of butter or canola oil and a dash of salt to the pot. Stir well to coat all the carrots.

TIP: Use one Tablespoon of minced fresh herbs for every 2 cups of carrots.

If using dried herbs, use only one teaspoon for every 2 cups of carrots. Dried herbs should be added directly to the pot with butter and salt to soften before serving.

In Class

1. Invite providers to touch, smell, and taste the raw forms of the herbs chosen for this activity.
2. Distribute carrots evenly into each bowl of herbs and mix so that buttered carrots are covered with herbs.
3. Invite everyone to taste each herbed carrot and indicate their preferred flavor by placing a sticker on the index card in front of the herb bowl they liked best. Provide everyone with another taste of the one or two most popular flavors.
4. Suggest that providers use this activity as a way to engage children in learning about different flavors and providing input to the menu — both strategies to help kids accept new foods. Ask providers which other vegetables they might use for this activity (e.g., broccoli, zucchini, corn, lima beans, other beans, tomatoes).

Set Goals: Choosing Healthy Foods for Kids

Key Messages

- Serve a variety of fruits and vegetables to the kids in your care.
- Make sure at least half of the grains you serve are whole grains.
- Read food labels to make smart choices about the foods you serve.
- You can make healthier versions of kids' favorite prepackaged meals and snacks.

Challenge Yourself

My goal is to...

Serve at least one new whole grain food to the kids in my care.

How can I check to be sure a grain food is a whole grain? _____

Which new whole grains did I learn about in class today? Which would I like to serve to kids? _____

Which recipes from class using whole grains would I like to make for kids? _____

Make a healthier version of at least one prepackaged meal or snack for the kids in my care.

Which prepackaged meals or snacks do the kids in my care enjoy? _____

Which of these prepackaged meals or snacks would I like to try making for the kids myself using a recipe from class? _____

When will I make and serve this meal? _____
