

HEALTH & WELLNESS LEARNING THE LABEL

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NUTRITION NEWS

Health & Wellness
Series

Understanding Nutrition Labels Part IV

References:
U.S. Department of Health and
Human Services

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/Labeling/Nutrition/default.htm>

<http://www.fda.gov/food/labelingnutrition/consumerinformation/ucm078889.htm>

Breyer's Light Vanilla Ice Cream

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 1/2 cup (68g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 110	Calories from Fat 28
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 3.12 g	5%
Saturated Fat 1.95 g	10%
Trans Fat	
Cholesterol 10.2 mg	3%
Sodium 48.28 mg	2%
Potassium	
Total Carbohydrate 17.2 g	6%
Dietary Fiber 0.14 g	1%
Sugars 15.49 g	
Sugar Alcohols	
Protein 3.29 g	
Vitamin A 297.16 IU	6%
Vitamin C 0.75 mg	1%
Calcium 114.92 mg	11%
Iron 0.04 mg	0%

Nutrients to keep in the "low" range include: *Total Fat, Cholesterol, and Sodium.*

Nutrients to keep in the "high" range include: *Fiber and Carbohydrates.*

While it seems confusing at first glance, the % Daily Value portion of Nutrition Labels is actually quite simple and useful. First, understand that the percentages listed do not add up vertically. Instead, each listed percentage is based on 100% of the daily requirements for each nutrient (here's the only catch), *based on a 2,000 calorie diet.*

The following is a breakdown of the relationship between Daily Value recommendations and % Daily Values (DV) based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Nutrient	DV	%DV	Goal
Total Fat	65g	= 100%DV	Less than
Sat Fat	20g	= 100%DV	Less than
Cholesterol	300mg	= 100%DV	Less than
Sodium	2400mg	= 100%DV	Less than
Total Carbohydrate	300g	= 100%DV	At least
Dietary Fiber	25g	= 100%DV	At least

Obviously, not everyone requires a daily caloric intake of 2,000 calories. Many individuals will require more or less total calories per day depending on their respective health goals. Even if your diet isn't based on 2,000 calories, you can still use the % Daily Value portion of Nutrition Labels as a point of reference. Just keep in mind that any nutrient with a value of 5% or less is considered "low", while anything 20% or more is considered "high" for that particular nutrient.

The only kind of math required with %DV is addition. Let's take a look at a sample McDonald's meal to show you how quickly nutrients add up.

Big Mac:

Total Fat- 29 grams (45% daily value)
Sodium- 1040 mg (43% daily value)

Medium Fries:

Total Fat- 19 grams (29% daily value)
Sodium- 270 mg (11% daily value)

With this meal alone, you have consumed 74% of your daily allowance for total fat (45%+29%), leaving you with 26% of your total fat allowance for the rest of the day. You have consumed 54% of your daily allowance for sodium (43%+11%), leaving 46% for the rest of the foods you consume that day.

Reading and understanding nutrition labels can be beneficial in many ways. Instead of guessing how many calories, total fat grams, milligrams of sodium, or other nutrients we consume each day, these labels empower us with knowledge. As firefighters, we take great strides in ensuring our equipment, ppe and apparatus is in optimal working form. We know exactly what type of fuel is required for each apparatus, saw, or pump. It is time we take such strides with our most valuable resource- ourselves. Just as different types of equipment may require various types of fuel or mixtures of fuel to run properly, our bodies require a certain mixture of nutrients to fuel our best performance, both on and off duty.