

Making Healthier Food Choices at the Grocery Store

To be a smart shopper, you need to look at all the foods you eat. This handout will help you to make healthier food choices in the grocery store.

What you should know before you go:



- ✓ Make a weekly meal plan with your family. Use this plan to make your shopping list.
- ✓ Have a snack before you leave. We tend to make less healthy choices when we shop hungry.
- ✓ Shop around the outside of the store for fresh and whole food choices.
- ✓ Look high and low on the shelves for any brands including store brand items that may be better in price than the choices at eye level.

Nutrition Labelling

A food label has **3 types** of nutrition information:

- 1 **The ingredient list** tells you what ingredients are in a packaged food. Ingredients are listed from most to least, meaning a food has more of the ingredients found at the beginning of the list and less of the ingredients at the end of the list.

- 2 **A Nutrition Facts table has:**

- * The serving size
- * The percent Daily Value (% DV)
- * Nutrients

The information in the table is based on the **serving size** at the top of the table (e.g., 1 slice or 1 cup). Compare the serving size to the amount of food you actually eat. For example, the serving size for bread may be 1 slice – if you eat 2 slices, you need to double the amount of nutrients and calories listed in the table.

The **% DV** shows if the food has a little or a lot of a **nutrient**:

- * **5% or less is a little.** Look for 5% DV or less for saturated and trans fat as well as sodium (salt) and sugar.
- * **15% or more is a lot.** Look for 15% or more for fiber, calcium, iron, and potassium.

Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL) pour 1 tasse (250 mL)	
Calories 110	% Daily Value*
	% valeur quotidienne*
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0%
Saturated / saturés 0 g + Trans / trans 0 g	0%
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0%
Sugars / Sucres 22 g	22%
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 0 mg	0%
Potassium 450 mg	10%
Calcium 30 mg	2%
Iron / Fer 0 mg	0%

*5% or less is a **little**, 15% or more is a **lot**
*5% ou moins c'est **peu**, 15% ou plus c'est **beaucoup**

** Please note the Nutrition Facts example here is based on the new design which will be on all products by 2021. It is much like the current design so it is still a helpful example.*

- 3 Nutrition claims like “source of fibre” or “no added sodium” can help you choose foods with a nutrient you may want more or less of.

They may also tell the health effects of a food, such as “a diet low in saturated and trans fat reduces risk of heart disease”.

- Nutrition claims are optional and only highlight a few nutrients or foods. Use the Nutrition Facts table and the ingredient list instead of nutrition claims to make healthier food choices.



Vegetables and Fruit



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- Fill half your plate with colourful vegetables and fruit to keep your body healthy. Fresh, frozen and canned are all good options.
- Choose in-season vegetables and fruit. Blanch and freeze vegetables by boiling them for a few minutes first. Then place vegetables in ice-cold water to stop cooking, drain water and freeze.
- Water is the best choice when you're thirsty. Replace juice with whole fruit and get extra fibre.

Activity to try while shopping:

1. Pick a new vegetable or fruit to try every time you go grocery shopping.



Whole Grain Products

- Choose **whole grain** products most often as they are high in fibre.
- In the ingredient list, look for these words that mean whole grain:
 - * *Whole grain whole wheat*
 - * *Whole rye*
 - * *Whole spelt*
 - * *Whole grain oats*
 - * *Flaxseed*
- High fat and high sugar items like donuts, cookies and croissants, are **not** grain products.



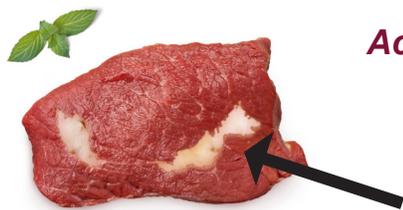
Activities to try while shopping:

1. Look at “whole grain whole wheat”, “whole wheat” and “enriched wheat flour” breads, and compare the amount of fibre in each.
2. Compare the whole grain, fibre and sugar amounts in different cereal bars.

Protein Foods



- Choose plant-based protein such as dried or canned beans, peas, lentils, chickpeas and tofu more often.
- Choose eggs, fish, poultry and leaner cuts of meat.
- Cook and slice fresh meat for sandwiches rather than using processed deli meats to help lower your salt (sodium) and saturated fat intake.
- Limit breaded and battered fish products; choose plain fillets instead.



Activities to try while shopping:

1. Look at the amount of sodium in dried beans versus canned beans.
2. Find 2 different cuts of meat and look at the marbling and thick white fat to find which is lower in saturated fat.

- Milk and milk products have protein, fat, calcium and sometimes Vitamin D for strong bones and healthy teeth. Check the nutrition facts table for the Vitamin D and try to pick lower fat choices more often.
- Make sure plant-based beverages, like soy or almond beverages, are **fortified with vitamin D and calcium**.
- Butter, margarine, sour cream and cream cheese are **not** part of this food group as they are high in fat, and low in calcium and protein.



Activities to try while shopping:

1. Compare the fat and calorie amounts in milks with 3.25% MF (milk fat), 2% MF, 1% MF, and skim milk.
2. Look at a variety of milk, yogurt and cheese products, and compare the calcium, calories, fat and sugar amounts in each.



Fats and Oils

- Stick to **non-hydrogenated** soft margarines and oils made from heart healthy unsaturated fats.
- Examples of **healthy unsaturated** fat oils are:
 - * Safflower
 - * Sunflower
 - * Canola
 - * Flaxseed
 - * Corn
 - * Soybean
 - * Olive oil
- Try oil-based salad dressings more often as they are usually lower in fat and sugars than creamy dressings.



Activities to try while shopping:

1. Look at the fat and sugar amounts in salad dressings (creamy versus oil based and full fat versus low fat/fat free).
2. Compare different oils to find which has the most unsaturated fat per serving.

Frozen and Canned Products

- Remember to drain and wash all canned products.
- Look for products with **no added** sugar or salt.
- Choose fruit and fish canned in water.
- Avoid frozen vegetables with sauces or breading.



Activities to try while shopping:

1. Look at the sodium and sugar amounts in different canned products.
2. Look at the fat and sodium content of sauce-based frozen products and plain frozen products.

For more information call 1-800-660-5853
or visit www.healthunit.org

