



## Decoding Food Labels

If you want to know how nutritious your breakfast cereal or microwavable dinner is, check out the food label on the package. But read carefully, or you could wind up consuming more calories and fat than you think.

“The biggest mistake people make while reading food labels is not looking at the serving size,” says nutritionist Robin Vitetta-Miller. “They say, ‘Oh wow, this only has 100 calories’ and they eat the whole thing. They end up consuming three or four times the amount of calories they planned for.”

Serving size is the first item listed under the nutrition facts section of the food label. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the serving size is the first place to look because it influences all the nutrient amounts listed below it. Serving sizes are supposed to be based on the amount of food people typically eat in a sitting. Always compare serving size to how much you actually consume.

### What’s that about fat?

Consumers often get stumped by labeling information regarding fat content. Just what is the difference between fat-free, low-fat, and reduced fat? According to the FDA:

- Fat-free is less than one-half gram of fat per serving.
- Low-fat is three grams of fat or less per serving.
- Reduced fat is 25 percent fewer calories than the regular version of the food.
- Light is one-third fewer calories or one-half the fat of the regular version of the food.

Manufacturers list total fat and the percentage of saturated fats along with trans fatty acids, or trans fats. Trans fats raise bad cholesterol (LDL) levels and lower good (HDL) cholesterol levels. Experts recommend replacing saturated and trans fats with mono- and polyunsaturated fats. These fats do not raise LDL cholesterol levels and have health benefits when consumed in moderation.

Source: UnitedHealthcare



**For more information regarding the TeamHealth Wellness Program, go to the Wellness Website ([teamhealth.com/wellness](http://teamhealth.com/wellness)).**