Watching your weight? Keep an eye on food labels, Too!

If weight maintenance is one of your New Year’s resolutions, food labels can be a helpful tool. Calories do count when you’re watching your weight. Compare labels to find lower calorie options.

First, check the serving size. A container may have more than one “serving.” For example, if a bottle contains 2 cups of juice but the label describes a serving as being 1 cup, you’ll consume double the number of calories listed if you drink the whole bottle. You might want to save some of the beverage for later rather than drinking it all at one time.

Be wary of calorie-laden foods that take too much of your “calorie allowance.” To keep weight steady, many sedentary women and some older adults need about 1,600 calories each day. Most children, teenage girls, and active women and many sedentary men need about 2,200 calories. Teenage boys, many active men, and some very active women need about 2,800 calories.

When you compare foods, look for less fat per serving. Don’t assume that you can eat more just because a food is labeled “low” or “reduced” fat. If ingredients are substituted for the fat, they’ll contribute calories, too.

Not all consumers take advantage of the information provided on food labels. A recent AP-Ipsos poll showed that 51 percent of men and 65 percent of women said they do read food labels, checking for key words such as “fat,” “calories,” and “sugar.” Forty-four percent of the 1,003 adults surveyed admitted that they bought the food regardless of whether the nutrient content was favorable, however.

Some people may find labels hard to use. Reading and math skills are needed to calculate amounts when more or less than the listed serving size is eaten. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is considering modifications that would make labels easier to understand.

An FDA brochure with pointers on how to understand and use the food label is available at:

http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/foodlab.html

Resource
Looking for that label. *Prepared Foods*, 9/06

Contact
Angela Bonham, OSU Extension Family and Community Development Faculty, Union/Baker County

Source
Carolyn Raab, Extension food and nutrition specialist, Oregon State University; raabc@oregonstate.edu
A Quick Look at the Role of Fats and Oils in Nutrition

Fats occur naturally in food and play an important role in nutrition. Fats and oils provide energy, insulate the body, and transport some vitamins through the blood. Fats are used in food preparation, providing flavor and tenderness.

Fats and oils are made up of units called fatty acids. Most fats and oils contain a mixture of different types of fatty acids. While dietary fat is an important part of the diet, too much of any type of fat can add too many calories, leading to overweight and higher risk for heart disease and some types of cancer.

Let’s look at some different kinds of fats found in the foods we eat.

- **Saturated fatty acids** are solid at room temperatures and are found in meat and poultry, lard, whole or reduced-fat milk and dairy products, butter, and some vegetable oils (coconut, palm, and palm kernel oil). Too much saturated fat can raise blood cholesterol and increase risk for heart disease.

- **Monounsaturated fatty acids** are liquid at room temperatures and are found in vegetable oils such as canola, olive, and peanut oils. Monounsaturated fats can help lower your LDL levels.*

- **Polyunsaturated fatty acids** also are liquid at room temperature; they are found in vegetable oils such as corn, sunflower, and safflower oils. Polyunsaturated fats are necessary for cell structure and hormone production.

- **Trans fatty acids** are created when liquid vegetable oils are processed into a solid fat. Also called “partially hydrogenated” fats or oils, trans fatty acids can raise LDL levels and lower HDL levels.* Trans fatty acids are found in many commercially made cookies, crackers, fast foods, snack chips, and cakes.

*HDL (the so-called “good cholesterol”) actually describes a “carrier” that removes excess cholesterol. LDL (the so-called “bad cholesterol”) is a “carrier” that allows fatty deposits to build up in arteries and can lead to heart disease. Eating too many or not enough of some types of fatty acids can affect your levels of HDL and LDL.

**What about cholesterol?** Cholesterol is a fat-like substance important for healthy cell membranes and hormone production and for the production of bile, which helps with digestion. The human body makes cholesterol in the course of normal processes. Another form of cholesterol, dietary cholesterol, is found in animal foods such as egg yolks and meats. Too much cholesterol in the blood can create deposits in the walls of blood vessels and reduce blood flow.

Most Americans need to decrease their intakes of saturated fats and trans fats, and many need to decrease their intake of dietary cholesterol. Checking the nutrition facts label on food packages can help you know what percentage of the total fat in a product is saturated, whether it contains trans fats, and how much cholesterol is provided per serving. The ingredients list on the package provides additional information on the type of fat(s) used—e.g., canola oil, lard, partially hydrogenated vegetable oil, or palm oil.

For more information and tips on how to choose fats and oils for good health, visit the websites of the American Heart Association—http://www.americanheart.org/—and the American Dietetic Association, http://www.eatright.org/

**References**
American Heart Association,
2005 USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans

**Contact**
Angela Bonham, OSU Family and Community Development Faculty,
Union/Baker County

**Source**
Anne Hoisington, Extension Food and Nutrition Senior Instructor, OSU;
anne.hoisington@oregonstate.edu

**USDA Meat & Poultry Hotline**
1-800-535-4555
Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.—1 p.m.
Recorded Information 24 Hours a day
Internet http://www.usda.gov/fsis
Look around you—what do you see? People are rushing around getting ready for the holidays. It’s all too easy to get yourself stuck in the same old stressful cycle year after year. Many of us, it seems, fail to recognize this self-destructive pattern and come to dread the holidays. Perhaps this feeling is, in part, due to a lack of thought about what the holiday season really means to us. If we can take this into consideration, then we might be better able to spend time doing what we really think is important.

Take time to decide what the purpose of the holiday season really is for you and your family. Define the holidays in any way that is meaningful to you. Create your own traditions that reflect your values.

Next, write down your holiday goals. What do you want to accomplish this holiday season? For example, help those in need? Spend more time with family and friends? Teach the kids what the season is really about? Spend more or less money than last year? Writing down your goals will help you spend time and money more wisely.

Once you have written your goals, you can develop a plan of action. It is usually wise to pull out a calendar and write down the things that need to be done and when you plan to do them. Be sure to leave plenty of blank space, because, in addition to all the unexpected events that tend to pop up, you also need plenty of time to relax and recharge your batteries.

If one of your goals is cutting holiday gift-giving expenses, here are a few tips.

• Offer your time, instead of something you buy, as a gift to family members and friends. With both parents working or one parent trying to do the job of two, time might be worth a lot more than a purchased gift.

• In families, each person can write his or her name on an index card. On the back of the card, the person can list four gifts he or she would like in various price ranges.

• Many parents and grandparents want to be with their loved ones during the holiday season more than anything else. If, for financial reasons, you have to choose between buying your loved ones a gift or traveling to visit them, consider making your visit the gift.

If one of your goals during the holiday season is to teach your children that we are all part of a larger community and that how we spend our time reflects this, here are a few tips.

• Most organizations need volunteers just as much, if not more, than they need money during the holiday season. Call an organization that interests you and see what you and your family can do to help out.

• During and right after the holiday season is the most difficult time for almost all individuals who are not with loved ones. Levels of depression and suicide rise alarmingly during this time. This is especially true if someone has lost a loved one or has experienced other stressful events such as a divorce or the loss of a job. If you know someone who’s away from home or has no family, invite him or her to celebrate with you during the holidays.

• The holiday season is a good time to go through your closets and the rest of your house to see what you no longer need. Make sure the items are still in good condition or good working order. Many dry cleaners will clean coats, free of charge, to give to the needy. Check with local charities to find the most appropriate one for the various items you would like to donate.

Reference

Contact
Angela Bonham, OSU Family and Community Development Faculty, Union/Baker County

Source
Denise Rennekamp, Extension Parenting Education Program Coordinator, OSU; denise.rennekamp@oregonstate.edu
**Good Choices in Snacks Can Help Kids’ Nutrition**

Snacks can help to fill the nutrient gaps in children’s diets. Choose foods and drinks that fit their needs.

Fruits and vegetables are always good choices. Try slices of fresh fruit, fruit canned in juice or light syrup, or dried fruit and fruit leather without added sugar. Serve bite-size fresh vegetables with a bean dip or low-fat salad dressing.

Include whole-grain snacks, too, such as English muffins, pita bread, tortillas, breakfast cereals, crackers, popcorn, granola, and breadsticks. Look for “whole grains” in the ingredients list and check the nutrition label to choose those that are lower in fat and sugar.

Dairy foods such as cheese and yogurt are good snacks for children, too. Look for those made with skim milk.

Water is a good choice for children’s snacks. Include low-fat (1 percent) or reduced-fat (2 percent) milk, too. Choose 100 percent fruit juice, but limit the amount so that it doesn’t take the place of other options.

**Contact**
Angela Bonham, OSU Extension Family and Community Development Faculty, Union/Baker County

**Source**
Carolyn Raab, Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist, Oregon State University; raabc@oregonstate.edu

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**Hurry Up Pumpkin Soup**

**Ingredients:**
- 4 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 3 cups cooked, diced pumpkin or 1 28-ounce can cooked pumpkin
- 1 cup thinly sliced onion
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 cup low-fat milk (or reconstituted non-fat dry milk)

**Directions:**
1. Combine all ingredients except milk in a medium saucepan.
2. Heat to boiling; reduce heat and simmer 15 minutes.
3. Mash mixture well, or puree in a blender, 2 cups at a time.
4. Add milk to pumpkin mixture and re-heat until steaming.
5. Refrigerate leftovers within 2-3 hours.

**Tip:** Serve this soup with toast or a muffin for a hearty meal.

Serving size = 1 cup, 60 calories, 0.5g total fat, 11g carbohydrates, 3g fiber, 3g protein


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**Winter Energy-Saving Tips**

The U.S. Department of Energy says, “This winter, save money and stay warm.” Here are some helpful tips the USDE has outlined. For additional information and ideas for other topics, please visit their website at: [http://www.energy.gov/index.htm](http://www.energy.gov/index.htm)

- During the heating season, keep the draperies and shades on your south facing windows open during the day to allow the sunlight to enter your home and closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows.
- Set your thermostat as low as is comfortable when home.
- Programming your thermostat from 72 degrees to 65 degrees for eight hours a day while no one is home, or while everyone is tucked in bed, can cut your heating bill up to 10 percent, paying for the cost of a basic unit in less than a year.
- Weatherize your home—caulk and weatherstrip any doors and windows that leak air.
- Properly maintain and clean heating equipment.
- Replace furnace filters regularly.
- Check the insulation in your attic, ceilings, exterior and basement walls, floors, and crawl spaces to see if it meets the levels recommended for your area.

[http://www.energy.gov/winter.htm](http://www.energy.gov/winter.htm)
StrongWomen
A National Fitness Program for Women
Monday, Wednesday, & Friday
9:00-10:00 am
Mondays and Thursdays
5:30-6:30 pm
Starting December 4, 2006 – February 9, 2007
(Scheduled time off during the holidays)
Agriculture Service Center South Conference Room
10507 N McAlister Rd
La Grande, OR  97850

$25 for initial 8 week session and $15 for any additional sessions afterwards

Please wear comfortable clothes, tennis shoes, and bring water and a bath size towel.

For additional information or questions please contact
Union County Extension Office
(541) 963-1010

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