

MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

March 2013

Decoding the Nutrition Facts Table on Prepackaged Foods

March is Nutrition Month! This year's campaign – *Best Food Forward: Plan Shop Cook Enjoy!* – is helping Canadians learn how to navigate the grocery store. Going along with this theme, this issue of *Minute Nutrition News* will teach you how to decode the mysterious numbers you find on food labels of prepackaged foods.

The image below is called the **Nutrition Facts table**. Since 2005, most prepackaged foods in Canada are required by law to display the amount of calories and 13 specified nutrients on this table. You can use the Nutrition Facts table to compare similar foods and the nutrients they contain.

Step #1:

Look for the serving size.

The nutrients listed in the table refer to this serving size of the food. Make sure you compare this to the amount you eat. For example, if you are consuming 250mL of this food (twice as much as the serving size), you will need to multiply all the nutrients by two to know how much of the nutrients you are getting.

Step #3:

Choose foods with...

- **More** fibre, vitamin A, calcium and iron (look for a higher % DV)
- **Less** fat, saturated fats, trans fats, and sodium (look for a lower % DV)

For example, you may see this Nutrition Facts table on a vegetable drink. This drink has little sodium (0% DV) and a moderate amount of fibre (8% DV). Not a bad choice!

For an example on how to compare food labels, flip over to the next page.

Step #2:

Read the % DVs.

The **% DVs, or percent daily values**, are the percentages on the right hand column. These numbers tell you how much or how little of the nutrient is in the food. As a general rule:

- 5% DV or less is a **little**
- 15% DV or more is a **lot**

Nutrition Facts	
Per 125 mL (87 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 80	
Fat 0.5 g	1 %
Saturated 0 g	
+ Trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate 18 g	6 %
Fibre 2 g	8 %
Sugars 2 g	
Protein 3 g	
Vitamin A 2 %	Vitamin C 10 %
Calcium 0 %	Iron 2 %



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Decoding the Nutrition Facts Table on Prepackaged Foods: Which Food is Better?

Yogurt A

Nutrition Facts	
Per ½ cup (125g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 60	
Fat 0g	0%
Saturated 0g + Trans 0g	0%
Cholesterol 5mg	
Sodium 75mg	3%
Carbohydrate 10g	3%
Fibre 0g	0%
Sugar 5g	
Protein 6g	
Vitamin A	0%
Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	20%
Iron	0%

Yogurt B

Nutrition Facts	
Per ½ cup (125g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 160	
Fat 7g	11%
Saturated 4.5g + Trans 0.2g	24%
Cholesterol 30mg	0%
Sodium 65mg	3%
Carbohydrate 19g	6%
Fibre 0g	0%
Sugar 19g	
Protein 4g	
Vitamin A	2%
Vitamin C	0%
Calcium	15%
Iron	0%

Step #1: Look for the serving size. Yogurt A and B both use a serving size of ½ cup (125g). Since this is the same, you can directly compare the amounts of nutrients listed in the Nutrition Facts table.

Step #2: Read the % DVs.

Yogurt A has little fat (0% DV), saturated and trans fat (0% DV) and sodium (3% DV).

Yogurt B has more fat (11% DV), lots of saturated and trans fat (24% DV) and little sodium (3% DV). Both have lots of calcium (20% and 15% DV).

Step #3: Choose. Since Yogurt A has less fat, saturated and trans fat compared to Yogurt B, Yogurt A may be a healthier choice if you are trying to eat less fat, saturated and trans fat as a part of your healthy lifestyle.

For extra tips on how to decode the sugar content on the Nutrition Facts table, drop by our clinic's sugar demonstration with the registered dietitian on Tuesday, March 5th from 10am to 12pm!