

**Label Reading for People with Diabetes**

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Knowledge of food labels and categories of food, and an understanding of food manufacturers' marketing techniques, are very important in determining which can or box on the shelf are the most "diabetes-friendly" items in your market.

The front of your food label is created by the marketing department to draw your attention to their product as opposed to the brand next to it. They will list words and phrases on the label that will catch your eye, such as "for diabetics," or "low-cholesterol" or "no sugar. These should be red flags for you to read more and explore the food label on the back of the product. Food labels are regulated by the FDA (Food & Drug Administration). There are strict criteria that manufacturers have to follow. For instance, to label a food "lite," it must have 10% less calories than the same food item that is not listed as "lite."

As a consumer and specifically a person with diabetes, your priority is to look at the food label on the back of the product to determine if that is an appropriate product for your needs.

Let's look at the criteria on a food label that are important for people with diabetes:

1. Looking at the attached label, the first listing is the Serving Size. If it is 1/2 cup, the numbers on the label are specifically for 1/2 cup of that item. If you sit in front of the TV and eat food from a bag, jar or box, do you know how much of that food you are eating in that sitting? Probably not! One-half cup is generally a safe estimate of 1 serving of any item. 1/2 cup of rice, pasta, potatoes = 1 serving. If your allotment of this food group (carbohydrates) is 2-3 at a meal, then you could eat 1 1/2 cups of that item, if that is the only food from the carbohydrate food group you are eating at that meal.

**Nutrition Facts**

Serving Size 1 slice (47g)	
Servings Per Container 8	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories 160</b>	<b>Calories from Fat 90</b>
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat 10g</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Saturated Fat 2.5g</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Trans Fat 2g</b>	
<b>Cholesterol 0mg</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium 300mg</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate 15g</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Dietary Fiber less than 1g</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Sugars 1g</b>	
<b>Protein 3g</b>	
<b>Vitamin A 0%</b>	<b>Vitamin C 4%</b>
<b>Calcium 0%</b>	<b>Iron 6%</b>
<b>Thiamin 8%</b>	<b>Riboflavin 6%</b>
<b>Niacin 6%</b>	
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:	
Calories: 2,000    2,500	
<b>Total Fat</b>	Less than 65g    80g
<b>Saturated Fat</b>	Less than 20g    25g
<b>Cholesterol</b>	Less than 300mg    300mg
<b>Sodium</b>	Less than 2,400mg    2,400mg
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	300g    375g
<b>Dietary Fiber</b>	25g    30g



2. The next component on the label to look at is the Total Carbohydrates. 15 grams of carbohydrate = 1 serving. Included in the carbohydrate category is Dietary Fiber and Sugars. These 2 listings are indented under the Total Carbohydrate category. This means that these subgroups are already counted in the Total Carbohydrate category, so they don't need to be counted again. If the carbohydrate category is between 30-45 grams, it should be appropriate for that meal. It is a common mistake for consumers to just look at the Sugar in a product to determine if a product is appropriate or not.

3. The third important listing on the label is Protein. As was mentioned last month, it is important to combine protein with carbohydrate at a meal to slow down the breakdown of the carbohydrates into sugar. If the ratio of protein:carbohydrate is minimum 1:3, this would be an appropriate food to purchase. If the product has very low protein content, then we need to add a source of protein along with that product at the meal.

There are other important things to notice on a food label, which we will discuss in another monthly article.

**Challenge for the month:** Read some labels of foods in your pantry or cupboard. When shopping, pick 4-5 products that you usually buy. Look and analyze the food label. If it isn't appropriate, look for another brand of the same product that may be a better fit of the criteria for that food product.

