

Grades 3–5

Serving sizes and portions

Look at the Label

Understanding nutrition facts

Consumers today can choose from a wide variety of affordable, tasty, convenient, and healthful foods provided by farmers and food producers. With that variety also comes the need to read labels and make informed decisions about what to eat and when. In advance, collect a class supply of empty food packages that include a nutrition label. Display one label so that all students can view it. Point out the sections labeled *serving size* and *servings per container*. Discuss how the label not only shows serving size, it also lists calories, fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, and protein, as well as vitamins, calcium, and iron. Explain to students that some foods are *fortified*, meaning that vitamins and minerals that aren't normally in the food are added (for example, some orange juice is fortified with calcium and vitamin D). Ask students to discuss why this information is important to a consumer.

Next, give each student a food package and a copy of the recording sheet. Have him use the label to complete his sheet. After each student is finished, assign each child a partner and have the twosome compare the nutritional information on their labels. Encourage them to compare which item has a better nutritional value. Then challenge students to compare the calories, sugar, saturated fat, and trans fat with the vitamins, fiber, and unsaturated fat. Is the food “worth” the calories students would spend on it? Is the nutrition content substantial? Is this a food students can eat often or is it a “sometimes” food?

Fun Fact:

Rice packs in more carbohydrates than potatoes for the same serving size. So if you're looking for that extra carbohydrate blast for your muscles, power up your plate with more rice.



Understanding Nutrition Fact Labels

Name _____

LOOK AT THE LABEL

Use your Nutrition Facts label to answer the questions.

My label is for _____

1. What is the serving size? _____
2. How many servings are in the package? _____
3. How many calories are there in a serving? _____
4. How many total grams of fat are in a serving? _____
5. Which vitamins, if any, are in this product? _____
6. Is this a product you could eat often or just occasionally? _____

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Extend the learning: Have students look up prices for some of the foods. Then have them compare the price with the nutritional content. What foods yield the most nutrition for the money?



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