

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON NUTRITION

Much of the following information was obtained from the San Bernardino and Riverside Counties Health Collaborative's Food and Physical Activity Worksite Policies.

1. What does low in fat, saturated fat and cholesterol mean?

On food labels, these terms are legally defined. Low fat means 3 grams or less fat per serving. Low saturated fat means 1 gram or less fat per serving. Low cholesterol is defined as 20 milligrams or less per serving. These numbers are very helpful when there is a food label right in front of you. But what about the food that comes from a bakery or deli, or food that is made at home? If there is no nutrient data available, you will have to use common sense when buying or making these dishes and bringing them to work related events. In general, any foods that contain unhealthy fat as a major ingredient are not considered healthy foods and are not good choices. Foods that generally do not fit into this category include:

- Most high fat meats such as bacon, ribs, chicken wings, salami
- High fat dairy products (foods with full fat cheese, cream, yogurt, cottage cheese, sour cream, cream cheese)
- Foods made with a lot of margarine, butter or eggs
- Most creamy salads (potato, macaroni and pasta salads)
- Fried foods (chips, French fries, egg rolls, doughnuts, etc)ⁱ

2. What is the definition of *trans* fats?

Trans fat (also known as *trans* fatty acids) is a specific type of fat formed when liquid oils are made into solid fats like shortening and hard margarine. However, a small amount of *trans* fat is found naturally, primarily in some animal-based foods.

Trans fat behaves like saturated fat by raising low-density lipoprotein (LDL or "bad") cholesterol that increases your risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). *Trans* fat can be found in some of the same foods as saturated fat, such as vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, baked goods, and other processed foods made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.ⁱⁱ

3. What is the definition of sugars?

Sugars are common food ingredients that are found in many forms. As carbohydrates, they are a contributor of calories for the body. Thus, they are an important energy source.

Sugars include sucrose, glucose, fructose, lactose and maltose and are found in foods such as fruits, vegetables, flour and cereal products and milk products. Manufacturers also add many of these sugars to foods during processing to



perform important functions. Further, sugars are part of ingredients like fruit juice concentrates, invert sugar, honey, molasses, hydrolyzed lactose syrup, whey protein concentrate, and products derived from the hydrolysis of starch such as high fructose corn syrup.

There are no nutritional differences among sugars. The body uses all types in the same way. During digestion, sugars such as sucrose and lactose and other carbohydrates such as starches break down into monosaccharides (single sugars). These monosaccharides then travel through the blood stream to body cells. There they provide energy and help form proteins.ⁱⁱⁱ

4. What is the definition of low sugar?

Foods low in sugar should contain less than 35% of sugar by weight. Foods with a lot of added sugar, and many processed foods do not fit into this category. Cakes, cookies, pies and candies have a high percent of sugar by weight.

5. What made you decide to recommend the nutrient guidelines 35% of calories by weight of sugar, 35% of calories from total fat, 10% of calories from saturated fat and 360mg of sodium?

It is generally agreed that weight gain will occur if we consume more calories than we need on a daily basis from excess fat and sugar intake leading to overweight, and obesity. In addition, large quantities of fat, saturated fat and sodium can lead to heart disease, high cholesterol and high blood pressure in some individuals. Many doctors, nutritionist and health practitioners and the federal government recommend nutrient intake and dietary guidelines for healthful eating based on your whole days intake, however, since there are no specific guidelines for individual food items, USDA's Dietary Guidelines for Americans^{iv} were used as a guide.

These standards are similar to the recommendations and changes that the Los Angeles Unified School District made (based on California legislation SB 12 and SB 965) to their competitive foods and food/beverage vending machine policy. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommendations for total fat, saturated fat and sugar could be applied to the individual snack and beverage item (vs. the entire meal or daily intake) since this is a level that includes many products already in use while eliminating some of the less nutritious options.

The sodium guideline was determined based on FDA guidelines that define a healthy food in the Federal Code of Regulations. This is a level that will continue to allow many snack items already in use.

6. How can I figure out if a product is less than 35% of calories from fat, less than 10% of calories from saturated fat and less than 35% sugar by weight?

These simple calculations can be derived from the Nutrition Facts Label, located on the product package.



To figure percent of calories from fat, use this simple equation:

$$\frac{\text{Grams of fat per serving} \times 9}{\text{Calories per serving}} \times 100 = \% \text{ calories from fat}$$

To figure percent sugar by weight, use this simple equation:

$$\frac{\text{Grams of sugar per serving}}{\text{Weight of food per serving in grams}} \times 100 = \% \text{ sugar by weight}$$

7. Where can I find more information about reading a food label and choosing healthy foods?

There are many resources available that provide detailed information about food label definitions, directions on reading a food label and guides to healthy eating. You may find them at the following websites:

The Food Guidance System
<http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

The Food Label Definitions
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/fdnewlab.html>

How to read a food label
<http://www.fda.gov/fdac/special/foodlabel/pyramid.html>
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flquiz1.html>

8. What is a serving size for fruits and vegetables and how many servings do I need?

The amount of fruit you need to eat depends on age, sex, and level of physical activity. Recommended daily amounts are shown in the chart.

Daily Recommendation		
Children	2-3 years old	1 cup**
	4-8 years old	1 to 1 ½ cups**
Girls	9-13 years old	1 ½ cups**
	14-18 years old	1 ½ cups**
Boys	9-13 years old	1 ½ cups**
	14-18 years old	2 cups**
Women	19-30 years old	2 cups**
	31-50 years old	1 ½ cups**
	51+ years old	1 ½ cups**
Men	19-30 years old	2 cups**
	31-50 years old	2 cups**
	51+ years old	2 cups**



**These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more while staying within calorie needs. For more information, visit: www.mypyramid.gov

What counts as a cup of fruit?

In general, 1 cup of fruit or 100% fruit juice, or ½ cup of dried fruit can be considered as 1 cup from the fruit group. The following specific amounts count as 1 cup of fruit (in some cases equivalents for ½ cup are also shown) towards your daily recommended intake:

	Amount that counts as 1 cup of fruit	Amount that counts as ½ cup of fruit
Apple	½ large (3.25" diameter) 1 small (2.5" diameter) 1 cup sliced or chopped, raw or cooked	½ cup sliced or chopped, raw or cooked
Applesauce	1 cup	1 snack container (4 oz)
Banana	1 cup sliced 1 large (8" to 9" long)	1 small
Cantaloupe	1 cup diced or melon balls	1 medium wedge (1/8 of a med. Melon)
Grapes	1 cup whole or cut-up 32 seedless grapes	16 seedless grapes
Grapefruit	1 medium (4" diameter) 1 cup sections	½ medium (4" diameter)
Mixed fruit (fruit cocktail)	1 cup diced or sliced, raw or canned, drained	1 snack container (4 oz) drained = 3/8 cup
Orange	1 large (3-1/16" diameter) 1 cup sections	1 small (2-3/8" diameter)
Orange, mandarin	1 cup canned, drained	½ cup canned, drained
Peach	1 large (2 ¾" diameter) 1 cup sliced or diced, raw, cooked, or canned, drained 2 halves, canned	1 small (2 3/8" diameter) 1 snack container (4 oz) drained = 3/8 cup
Pear	1 medium pear (2.5 per lb)	1 snack container (4 oz) drained = 3/8 cup



	1 cup sliced or diced, raw or cooked, or canned, drained	
Pineapple	1 cup chunks, sliced or crushed, raw, cooked or canned, drained	1 snack container (4 oz) drained = 3/8 cup
Plum	1 cup sliced raw or cooked 3 medium or 2 large plums	1 large plum
Strawberries	About 8 large berries 1 cup whole, halved, or sliced, fresh or frozen	1/2 cup whole, halved, or sliced
Watermelon	1 small wedge (1" thick) 1 cup diced or balls	6 melon balls
Dried fruit (raisins, prunes, apricots, etc.)	1/2 cup dried fruit is equivalent to 1 cup fruit 1/2 cup raisins 1/2 cup prunes 1/2 cup dried apricots	1/4 cup dried fruit is equivalent to 1/2 cup fruit 1 small box raisins (1.5 oz)
100% fruit juice (orange, apple, grape, grapefruit, etc.)	1 cup	1/2 cup

How many vegetables are needed daily?

Daily Recommendation		
Children	2-3 years old	1 cup**
	4-8 years old	1 1/2 cups**
Girls	9-13 years old	2 cups**
	14-18 years old	2 1/2 cups**
Boys	9-13 years old	2 1/2 cups**
	14-18 years old	3 cups**
Women	19-30 years old	2 1/2 cups**
	31-50 years old	2 1/2 cups**
	51+ years old	2 cups**
Men	19-30 years old	3 cups**
	31-50 years old	3 cups**
	51+ years old	2 1/2 cups**

**These amounts are appropriate for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity, beyond normal daily activities. Those who are more physically active may be able to consume more while staying within calorie needs. For more information, visit: www.mypyramid.gov



What counts as a cup of vegetables?

In general, 1 cup of raw or cooked vegetables or vegetable juice, or 2 cups of raw leafy greens can be considered as 1 cup from the vegetable group. The chart lists specific amounts count as 1 cup of vegetables (in some cases equivalents for ½ cup are also shown) towards your recommended intake:

	Amount that counts as 1 cup of vegetables	Amount that counts as ½ cup of vegetables
Dark-Green Vegetables		
Broccoli	1 cup chopped or florets 3 spears 5" long raw or cooked	½ cup chopped or florets
Greens (collards, mustard greens, turnip greens, kale)	1 cup cooked	½ cup cooked
Spinach	1 cup, cooked 2 cups raw is equivalent to 1 cup of vegetables	1 cup raw is equivalent to ½ cup of vegetables
Raw leafy greens: Spinach, romaine, watercress, dark green leafy lettuce, endive, escarole	2 cups raw is equivalent to 1 cup of vegetables	1 cup raw is equivalent to ½ cup of vegetables
Orange Vegetables		
Carrots	1 cup, strips, sliced, or chopped, raw or cooked 2 medium 1 cup baby carrots (about 12)	1 medium carrot About 6 baby carrots
Pumpkin	1 cup mashed, cooked	½ cup mashed, cooked
Sweet Potato	1 large baked (2 ¼" or more diameter) 1 cup sliced or mashed, cooked	½ large baked (2 ¼" or more diameter) ½ cup sliced or mashed, cooked
Winter Squash (acorn, butternut, hubbard)	1 cup cubed, cooked	½ acorn squash, baked = ¾ cup
Dry Beans and Peas		
Dry beans and peas (such as black, garbanzo, kidney, pinto, or soy beans, or black eyed peas or split peas)	1 cup whole or mashed, cooked	½ cup whole or mashed, cooked
Tofu	1 cup ½" cubes (about 8 ounces)	1 piece 2 ½" x 2 ¾" x 1" (about 4 ounces)
Starchy Vegetables		



Corn, yellow or white	1 cup 1 large ear (8" to 9" long)	1 small ear (about 6" long)
Green peas	1 cup	½ cup
White potatoes	1 cup diced, mashed 1 medium boiled or baked potato (2 ½" to 3" diameter) French fried: 20 medium to long strips (2 ½" to 4" long)	½ cup diced, mashed ½ medium boiled or baked potato (2 ½" to 3" diameter) French fried: 10 medium to long strips (2 ½" to 4" long)
Other Vegetables		
Bean sprouts	1 cup cooked	½ cup cooked
Cabbage, green	1 cup, chopped or shredded raw or cooked	½ cup, chopped or shredded raw or cooked
Cauliflower	1 cup pieces or florets raw or cooked	½ cup pieces or florets raw or cooked
Celery	1 cup, diced or sliced, raw or cooked 2 large stalks (11" to 12" long)	1 large stalk (11" to 12" long)
Cucumbers	1 cup raw, sliced or chopped	½ cup raw, sliced or chopped
Green or wax beans	1 cup cooked	½ cup cooked
Green or red peppers	1 cup chopped, raw or cooked 1 large pepper (3" diameter, 3-3/4" long)	1 small pepper
Lettuce, iceberg or head	2 cups raw, shredded or chopped = equivalent to 1 cup of vegetables	1 cup raw, shredded or chopped = equivalent to ½ cup of vegetables
Mushrooms	1 cup raw or cooked	½ cup raw or cooked
Onions	1 cup chopped, raw or cooked	½ cup chopped, raw or cooked
Tomatoes	1 large raw whole (3") 1 cup chopped or sliced, raw, canned, or cooked	1 small whole (2 ¼") 1 medium canned
Tomato or mixed vegetable juice	1 cup	½ cup
Summer Squash or zucchini	1 cup cooked, sliced or diced	½ cup

ⁱ San Bernardino and Riverside Counties worksite policies.

ⁱⁱ US Food and Drug Administration. Questions and Answers about *Trans* Fat Nutrition Labeling. Available at <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qatrans2.html#s1q3>. Accessed January 8, 2005.

ⁱⁱⁱ International Food Information Council. IFIC Review: Sweet Facts About Sugars and Health. Available at <http://www.ific.org/publications/reviews/sugarsir.cfm>. Accessed January 8, 2005.

^{iv} US Food and Drug Administration. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005. Available at <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/-dga2005/document/pdf/DGA2005.pdf>. Accessed January 8, 2005.

