

Reading Food Labels

We're back. I am Amy. We are talking about food labels today. I hope you have a chance to review the web site that was linked to this lesson. There is an awful lot of detail that goes into food labels as I am sure you have found. If you have tried to read food labels they can be a little confusing. A lot of people don't like them so what we wanted to do today was kind of break it down a little bit but it would be really helpful if you have looked at the web site first so if you haven't maybe you know take a minute to look at that and then come back and join us. So, the first thing that I want to ask you is when you look at a food label what is the first thing that you look at. Would it be calories, fat, serving size? Well the first thing you are supposed to look at is the serving size and the reason is because everything that you look at on the whole food label is based on one serving so in a lot of food packages you might think there would be one maybe two serving and there could be three or four or five so you have to take all of the information times however many of the servings that you eat so for an example when we get food records from Veterans a lot of times it will say for breakfast cereal and milk and that doesn't help a lot because we don't know what kind of cereal, we don't know how much, is it a cup, two cups who knows and when we ask a lot of times people will say whatever fits in my bowl is what I eat and then I dump milk on it and so we are going to do an example today of filling a cereal bowl and lets see how much is in there. Now this is granola. Granola itself is actually a very high calorie cereal so you do want to be careful eating too much of it so you know there is a guess. The average bowl probably serving size for granola is actually about a half a cup because it pretty dense in calories so what I wanted to do today was take this average bowl and measure it out and give you an idea of how many servings you are probably eating so we are going to measure it and find we have about two cups so that would be four servings of granola so depending on the granola 400-600 calories it could be by the time you add your milk to it. So, one way that we could increase our nutrition and cut our calories back and still be satisfied would be to use this granola in a yogurt parfait. So, we are going to grab some yogurt and berries and a light yogurt is a great way to go. This is about 100 calories here. It doesn't matter the flavor or the brand. Usually, if you look for the word light it will cut some of the fat out and it will cut a lot of sugar out and then instead of using such you know such a large amount of granola we can just sprinkle about a half of a cup on there. Another thing that I like to do is to add berries to it for more volume to get more nutrition, more fiber, and it looks a lot more appealing too to have a lot more color and if any of you feel like you are losing your memory berries are good for your memory so there would be another perk. So, you still get a pretty large amount of food, a lot of color, a lot of nutrition but about half the amount of calories that you had just with your granola and you still get at least 20 percent of the calcium you need in a day as you would have with the milk with the cereal.

Yogurt is a great source of calcium just as good as a source of milk is so you are getting a lot more nutrition than you would have with just that granola. Another tip too would be to choose a lower calorie cereal. You still want 5 grams of fiber or more per serving of your cereal and you could just cut bananas or put berries or whatever you would like on your cereal too that would be a way to get more bulk and more nutrition and less calories. While we are on the topic of yogurt, I wanted to show two things with the food label. Now these are two fairly similar amounts of yogurt but the calories are quite different. This container has 80 and this container has 250. Granted this is how you know slightly larger but not enough to triple the

calories. The one thing I wanted to point out is this yogurt says that it is low fat yogurt. One thing you want to be aware of is it is not always good to choose the low fat or the fat free without looking at the label because sometimes you take the fat out and replace it with a lot of sugar or salt or sometimes we take sugar out and call cookies sugar free cookies but then we put a lot more fat in so you always want to be a smart consumer and read that food label so that you know and you can watch out for those things. Now, this is the same demonstration that is in the web site that you were to have already reviewed and it shows the same types of labels but I am just going to show in person here so if we look a little bit closer this low fat yogurt has 250 calories in it and granted it is low fat. The fat is only 2.5 grams but what is really high is the amount of sugar is really high. It is 46 grams. Now a lot of people will say what does that mean? Forty-six grams doesn't really tell me anything. Well a nice trick to know is if you take the grams of carbohydrate and you divide it by 4 that is how many teaspoons of sugar are in something. So, for this we could take 46 grams divided by 4 and we have about 11-11.5 teaspoons of sugar. Now granted yogurt seems a little higher falsely a little higher because milk has natural milk sugar in it so that is just a naturally occurring thing that wasn't added but there is a fair amount of sugar added to this so 12 teaspoons total in here is a fair amount of sugar. There are 3 teaspoons in 1 tablespoon and that is a good thing to remember too so our other one is the light and light tends to be the way that I like to go because it usually cuts back fat and calories but I find it is not falsely high in something else so this one has 80 calories and the carbohydrates are 15 grams instead of 46 like the other one. So, this would be a lot better choice you get a third less calories choosing the light. In summary, be careful of the low fat or sugar free or some of those different terminology because you still have to be a smart consumer and watch that label.

Back to the most important thing to look at on the food label being the serving size and I have a couple examples to show you of things that I have had a few patients come in and say I don't understand why I am not losing any weight. I eat three healthy meals and you know I only snack on trail mix that is dried fruits and nuts that can't be unhealthy. Well, it is not unhealthy in the right portions but if you are eating four or five portions of it, now we are talking about the amount of calories you need for a whole day just in your trail mix. So, what you want to do is look at that label and read your serving size. In this packet, a serving size is a quarter of a cup. The one thing that you always want to watch is how many serving are in that container and in this there is 8 so you know if you grab this and wind up eating it through the day you have a lot more than 150 calories so lets look at one serving would be. This is a quarter cup so that would be one serving. It doesn't look like a whole of food to me. I don't think I would be very satisfied with that so it would be very easy to overeat on that so if you are trying to lose weight and you feel like if I buy this I am going to eat the whole thing, don't buy it because you will eat the whole thing. If you have the willpower to take one serving, close your bag, go over to your pantry, put it away and stay away from it, then go ahead it is a pretty healthy snack. Nuts and dried fruit have a lot of nutrition it is just the fact that if you are going to overeat on them then they are not as healthy. So, how many calories would be in this entire packet well it is 150×8 would be about 1200 calories you know if we are shooting for 1500-1800 calories in a day we have almost consumed all our calories just in this.

So, along similar lines, who doesn't like to eat roasted peanuts? Everybody does. It is pretty easy to sit in your chair at night if you are watching TV and you know I don't think many people

are counting out 40 peanuts which is a serving because it is much easier to grab a handful or wind up eating half the container so I wanted to show what 1 ounce of peanuts looks like and that is right here and that has 160 calories in it. Do you have any guesses as to how many servings are in this container? There are 12 servings in here so if we are mindlessly eating and watching TV and we wind up eating half of this that would be 960 calories and if we ate the whole thing it would be 1920 calories. If we ate the whole thing it would be more than we need in a day so there is that. Now what goes well with peanuts Coke or Pepsi depending on what you like or any other brand so we are going to look at this label on a 20 ounce bottle of pop and the serving size is one bottle so we know everything on this label is just what it is if we drink the whole thing. What we are going to look at here is total carbohydrates and again that is anything that breaks down into sugar is carbohydrate 65. If we divide that by 4 we have a whole lot of teaspoons of sugar in there. It actually works out to be a little over 5 tablespoons of sugar that are in this bottle of Coke so that bottle of Coke is 240 and these peanuts are 1920 are so easily get over 2000 calories in what could just be a snack. The other thing I wanted to show you is to be careful with what you would think would be a standard serving. Now this Coke had one serving in the container right. This serving size is 8 ounces and some of the 20 ounce bottle will do that they will have two and a half servings per container instead of one, thinking that you are actually just taking 8 ounces pouring it in a cup and just drinking one. I am assuming if you buy the bottle you are probably drinking the whole thing so you want to take it times the two and a half so what we are looking at here is 71 grams of total carbohydrate for the whole thing so if you divide it by 4 you will have how many teaspoons are in there and this works out to be a little over 6 tablespoons of sugar. It is hard to imagine that you can get that amount of sugar in that small amount of beverage.

Another caution is really in general you should be aware of staying away from large packages because research has shown that the larger the package is of a food or a drink that you buy the more you are going to eat or drink so you know sadly this isn't the largest pop you can buy. Now you can buy the 1 liter and you know you were probably doubling or tripling sugar in a lot of things so be careful of that. Let's listen to what some of our Veterans have to say about reading the food labels. We have a lot of Veterans who had never looked at a food label before starting MOVE and now that they have been learning you know what a benefit it is to look at that label and figure out what is in there they have really started looking at the labels and it has really helped with their weight loss so lets here what some of them have to say.

It changed my whole method of eating because of this program which I never bothered to do before. I just ate the same thing every day. I have to look at what I was eating and I go shop and I shop different now.

I do look at labels which I never did before. I think we have done a pretty good job of eliminating empty calories out of our diet. I guess I follow the calorie count more so than anything else. I also look at the fiber, amount of grams of fat, much more aware of all the low calory items in the food store now. It takes a little longer now I found that out in the grocery store and shopping you know taking the time to really look at labels before I pick up something and I think that is one thing that has really helped.

I think about not only quality but quantity and I have been able to control both and I have done very well here in this program.

There are two other things I wanted to talk to you about with the food label and they are both on the web site. The first is the guide to calories and what you will see on there is low calorie items have about 40 calories per serving, medium calorie items about 100, and then high calorie items have about 400. When you look at any food just keep those numbers in your head 40, 100, or 400 and you can look and see so an ounce of peanuts was 160 calories so that fits into you about a medium to high calorie food. Our light yogurt for this container was 80 calories so that would be a fairly low to medium calorie food. You can do this for any food. Our soda was 260 for this bottle so it is pretty high calorie medium high. The other thing is talking about the percent daily values. Now those confuse a lot of people. Basically, what you need to know about the percent is if you think about what you need for a whole day it is what percentage that food is going to provide for what you need for the whole day so for example we will go back to the peanuts again. The sodium in here is 190 mg and that is 8 percent so that is 8 percent of all the sodium you need in a day and if you hadn't noticed it on the web site you may want to go back and look. I am going to make a side note about the footnote on the label. Basically, what the footnote is the bottom that is on most labels and it gives you an idea of what you actually need in a day for fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrates, and fiber. In the nutrition world there are numbers of everything grams of this and ounces of this and you can't remember everything so that is why this footnote is critical if you are trying to learn how to read labels because when you think okay I need how many grams of fiber well just look on here. I need about 25 grams of fiber okay and then go from there but you can't remember every number there ever was so when you look at those percentages what you need to know and it is good to write it down and just remember if something is 5 percent or less it is low, if it is 20 percent or more it is high so lets look at a few examples. Let's look at our yogurt and lets say we are wondering is there calcium in yogurt is it low or high in that so what we would do is go and find calcium and we see that this amount of yogurt provides 20 percent of the calcium that we need for the whole day so that would be high calcium. It is a great option for bone health to have enough calcium. Let's look at butter. Now a serving size of butter is one tablespoon. Now we know it is a high fat food and it is from an animal so it is going to be higher in saturated fat but let's look how high it is so our saturated fat is 7 grams and that is 36 percent of what we need in a day so if 20 percent or more is high this is really high in saturated fat. It is a third of what you need for a day in one tablespoon which is not a lot so it is a nice trick when you are looking at the labels just to look at those percentages and think 5 percent that is not very much, 20 percent is high so that is a very good thing to keep in mind. One more thing I wanted to talk about was claims that are made on packaging. Now this is a good example of something we see quite a bit. These are just general snack crackers doesn't matter the brand and there is a version that is entitled wheat crackers and they say made with whole wheat well there is a big difference between 100 percent whole wheat as a primary ingredient or something that is just made with whole wheat so if something claims it is wheat you want to go look at the ingredient list so you turn it over and the first ingredient is always the most abundant ingredient, second most abundant and so on so you want to look at that first ingredient enriched flour so that is basically white flour not whole wheat flour and then you follow down and see what else is on the label and then we find whole wheat flour and then vegetable oil so we know these have some whole wheat but they are not based with 100

percent whole wheat okay. This bread is a double fiber kind of bread. Another claim we see a lot is 100 percent natural and you can see that on healthy foods and you can see that on very unhealthy foods. It doesn't necessarily mean it is healthy because it is natural. Now this bread is a very healthy choice but sometimes we see it on sugary and high fructose corn syrup drinks as all natural so what we want to do is find that label and look at the ingredient list and for anything that claims that it is wheat or whole wheat we want to look at that first ingredient and if it is whole wheat flour and that is how you know.

If you are going to track your calories and fat which we recommend, I wanted to show you a really handy tool and it doesn't have to be this book necessarily but there are a lot of good books out there that help you to count all your calories and your fat. This one is called the Calorie King Calorie Fat and Carbohydrate Counter but it is really nice because it is just a little guide you could keep it in you know your car or your purse or something and you can just slip to any food in here and it will tell you how many calories are in it, how many fat grams and then how many carbohydrates which is what turns to sugar so next time you are going into your pantry make sure you pull out that food label or the next time you go to the grocery store before you buy something look at that food label.

All right and we will see you next time.