



Pocket Guide to Understanding the Food Nutrition Facts Label

AAKP is the oldest and largest, fully independent kidney patient organization in the USA.

Join today! AAKP Membership is FREE for patients, family members, and living donors.

www.aakp.org/join

@kidneypatient

@kidneypatients

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this guide is to **help you read labels and make the best food choices for your kidneys.**

Purchased foods come in different forms. As an example, tomatoes can be bought fresh or made into a sauce, soup, condiment, or juice.

When foods are processed, they often contain added ingredients. Any packaged item has a food label. It is important to read food labels to be aware of added ingredients that may impact your health.



In this guide we cover **important nutrients to watch as part of your diet with kidney disease.**

FOOD LABEL

Food labels on packaged foods include a **Nutrition Facts table** and a **list of ingredients**.

Nutrition Facts	
4 servings per container	
Serving size	2 portions
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	360
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 22g	28%
Saturated Fat 3.5g	17%
Trans Fat 9g	
Cholesterol 25mg	9%
Sodium 680mg	29%
Total Carbohydrate 30g	11%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 2g	
Includes <1g Added Sugars	1%
Protein 10g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 60mg	4%
Iron 2mg	10%
Potassium 140mg	2%
*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	
INGREDIENTS: POLLOCK, VEGETABLE OIL (CANOLA OIL AND/OR SOYBEAN OIL), ENRICHED WHEAT FLOUR (FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMINE MONONITRATE, RIBOFLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), WATER, ENRICHED WHEAT FLOUR (FLOUR, NIACIN, FERROUS SULFATE, THIAMINE MONONITRATE, RIBOFLAVIN, FOLIC ACID), MODIFIED CORN STARCH, CONTAINS 2% OR LESS OF WHEY, CELLULOSE GUM, BICARBONATE, MONOCALCIUM PHOSPHATE, NONFAT MILK, SALT, YELLOW CORN FLOUR, SUGAR, SODIUM TRIPOLYPHOSPHATE (TO RETAIN MOISTURE).	

SERVING SIZE

Serving size is at the top of the Nutrition Facts table.

This is the quantity used to determine the numbers in the table. **BEWARE:** the serving size may not be the quantity you should be eating.

DO THE MATH: if you usually eat twice the serving size, you will have to double the numbers written on the food label: 160 mg (milligrams) of sodium would therefore become 320 mg.



Nutrition Facts	
about 9 servings per container	
Serving size 6 crackers (28g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	120
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 3.5g	4%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 20g	7%
Dietary Fiber 3g	
Total Sugars 0g	11%
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 10mg	0%
Iron 1.4mg	

When comparing different products, don't forget to compare serving sizes! E.g., you need to compare the Nutrition Facts of 1 cup of product A with 1 cup of product B.

SODIUM

Choose foods with **less than 200 mg** (milligrams) per serving or up to 600 mg for a meal type item.

A diet high in sodium (salt) can increase blood pressure, cause your body to keep more fluid, and can also make you feel thirsty.



Just because foods do not taste salty does not mean they are low in sodium. For example, baked goods are often high in sodium.

Processed foods often contain added sodium. This is the biggest contributor of dietary sodium to our diets.

PHOSPHORUS

Phosphorus is a mineral needed for bone health but too much can be harmful with kidney disease.

Avoid foods with phosphorus additives because they are so easily absorbed.

Phosphorus is not often in the Nutrition Facts label but that does not mean the food does not contain phosphorus.

Look for hidden phosphorus as a food additive ("phos" in the ingredients.

INGREDIENTS: ENRICHED MACARONI (WHEAT FLOUR, DURUM FLOUR, NIACIN, FERROUS SULFATE [IRON], THIAMIN MONONITRATE [VITAMIN B1], RIBOFLAVIN [VITAMIN B2], FOLIC ACID), CHEESE SAUCE MIX (WHEY, MILKFAT, SALT, MILK PROTEIN CONCENTRATE, SODIUM TRIPHOSPHATE, CONTAINS LESS THAN 2% OF TAPIOCA FLOUR, CITRIC ACID, LACTIC ACID, SODIUM PHOSPHATE, CALCIUM PHOSPHATE, WITH PAPRIKA, TURMERIC, AND ANNATTO ADDED FOR COLOR, ENZYMES, CHEESE CULTURE).

ORGANIC PHOSPHORUS

is naturally found in animal and plant-based foods. This type of phosphorus is not found on food labels and is only 40 to 60% absorbed.

INORGANIC PHOSPHORUS

is added when foods are processed. Foods with phosphate additives should be limited because almost 100% is absorbed.

POTASSIUM

Potassium* is a mineral that is essential for heart health but too much of it can be dangerous for people with kidney disease.

Each person's kidney diet is individualized. You may need to limit potassium while others may not.



CAUTION: All food labels contain % DV (Daily Value) for potassium. Foods with less than 2% DV may be listed as 0 mg of potassium per serving. This does not mean the food contains no potassium. In fact, it may contain up to 93 mg of potassium per serving and add up quickly depending on the portion you eat.

If you are limiting potassium in your diet, **choose foods with less than 200 mg** per serving or up to 600 mg for a meal type item. Compare similar products side by side and choose the lower potassium food.

* For more information visit the AAKP's "Are You O-K+" campaign in recognition of National High Potassium Awareness Day (every May 1st). www.areyouok.org

LIST OF INGREDIENTS & ADDITIVES

Many phosphorus and potassium additives can be found in processed foods. **Reading the ingredient list can help to find foods with these additives.**



Ingredients in foods are listed in the order of their total amount. Ingredients first on the list are found in higher amounts than ingredients listed last.

Try to limit **PHOSPHORUS ADDITIVES**. Avoid ingredients containing "phos" in their name, such as phosphoric acid, sodium phosphate, etc.

Try to limit eating foods with **POTASSIUM ADDITIVES**. As part of a low potassium diet, avoid ingredients containing the word "potassium", such as potassium lactate, potassium chloride and potassium phosphate. All foods should include the amount of potassium per serving on the label.

SUGAR & FIBER

Carbohydrates are a source of energy for your body.

Fiber has many health benefits. It can keep your bowels regular, slow down the speed your body absorbs sugar and lower your cholesterol level.

If you have diabetes, eating foods high in sugar can make managing blood sugars difficult. High blood sugars can damage your kidneys.

Total carbohydrate is the total amount of starch, fiber and sugar in a food.

Total sugars include those that are naturally occurring and those that have been added to foods.

Added sugars tells you the amount of sugar that has been added during processing.

Look for foods
**with less
sugar
and more
fiber.**



Nutrition Facts	
about 9 servings per container	
Serving size 6 crackers (28g)	
Amount per serving	120
Calories	120
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 3.5g	4%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 20g	7%
Dietary Fiber 3g	11%
Total Sugars 0g	
includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 10mg	0%
	8%

NUTRITION CLAIMS

Some foods have special regulated claims about what nutrients or health benefits you might get from eating that food.

Even if a food has a claim, it is important to **look at the label and judge for yourself whether it is a good choice for you.**



Claims about sodium are especially important. When it says on the package "no salt added" check the list of ingredients to **make sure potassium chloride has not been added to replace sodium chloride.**

When a product has "reduced sodium" or is "lightly salted" you should still check the Nutrition Facts table to see how much sodium it contains per serving.

CONCLUSION

As part of a healthy diet with kidney disease, **cooking with unprocessed or minimally processed foods is usually the best option.**



If choosing packaged foods, **read the food label to make the best choices for you.**

A U T H O R S

Janelle Gonyea, RDN, LD, FNKF

Clinical Dietitian

*AAKP Medal of Excellence
Award recipient*



info@aakp.org

(800) 749-2257

www.aakp.org

Stacey Phillips, MS, RDN

Registered Dietitian

*AAKP Medal of Excellence
Award recipient*

@kidneypatients

@kidneypatient

@kidneypatients

@kidneypatients

American Association of Kidney Patients

Visit our
website!



Join
AAKP!



Try Kidney
Friendly Recipes



AAKP encourages you to visit the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at
www.eatright.org to find a nutrition expert near you!