

LABEL LINGO Getting the Fat Out of Fat

By Suzanne Dal Lago, RN/CN/CPT

I love to give my clients a crash course in nutrition, I want them to be educated consumers making healthy choices based on knowledge. In doing so, we usually start with the basics, like how to read food labels; helping them navigate through the nutritional jungle helps them understand what the food labels really do and don't tell you.

FAT REVIEW

Fats found in foods are divided into four groups: saturated, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated and trans-saturated fats, or as we have come to know them, "friendly" and "unfriendly" fats. Saturated fats are unfriendly fats because they increase cholesterol levels in the blood and consequently can lead to heart disorders. Foods high in saturated fat include: meat products, hard cheese, butter and lard. Foods like pastries, cakes and biscuits generally contain butter, lard and/or coconut oil and are also high in saturated fat.

Trans-saturated fats are the most dangerous fats for our health. They are hydrogenated vegetable oils used in processed foods that contain shortenings, which tenderize the dough. Therefore, trans-fats are hydrogenated fats typically used in margarine, pastry and fast food products.

Friendly fats are monounsaturated and polyunsaturated, and are thought of as better because they lower the "bad" or "LDL" cholesterol levels in the blood. Foods that are high in unsaturated fats include: salmon, avocados, nuts, seeds, peanut butter, olive and select other oils.

FAT LAW

As of January 1st of this year, food manufacturers have been required to list trans-fat content on nutrition labels. This is where it gets fuzzy due to existing loopholes in nutritional labeling and the lack of reference values needed to make a valid RDV (Recommend Daily Value) assessment.

Although manufacturers are required to label trans-fats counts in their products, they are allowed to claim "0" levels, if the product has less than 0.5g of trans-fat per serving.

A good example of how this rule can be misleading can be found by looking at butter sprays. The label boasts "zero" calories and fat for a few sprays. But, if you were to use 25 sprays, the calories will total 20, with about 2 grams of fat. While this is still low, it's not "zero."

Cooking sprays further illustrate this point, most of which also have less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving listed on the label. However, with cooking sprays, the qualifying "fat free" claim in reality attaches itself to a product that is essentially 100% fat! And in this case, the potential for racking up a lot of fat grams exist if a heavy hand is used for cooking purposes. Gram for gram, fat contains more than twice as many calories as protein and carbohydrates, which is why fatty foods are a more concentrated source of calories than other foods.

FAT PANEL

People often wonder why the math doesn't always add up on the Nutrition Facts Panels. Discrepancies are due to things that have to be qualified and quantified and things that do not. Let's take a look at how the fat entries on an actual Nutrition Facts panel play out using Fritos as an example. Knowing what to look for is half the battle, understanding what to do with it once you find it, is another.

Fat Calories Per serving, there are 160 calories, 90 noted as coming from fat. If the fat calories aren't listed, or if you want to check the math, calculate the following:

Total Fat Grams (10)
X 9 [The # of Calories in a Gram]
90 Calories from Fat

Percentage of Fat Of those 90 fat calories, what's the total fat % of the serving? Take:

Calories from Fat (90)
÷ Total Calories (160)
56% Fat per Serving

The level of fat in this serving is 56% and far beyond the nutritionally recommended standards



**INGREDIENTS: CORN, CORN OIL, AND SALT.
NO PRESERVATIVES.**

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 oz. (28g/About 32 chips)	
Servings Per Container 3	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 160	Calories from Fat 90
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 10g	16%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	7%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 170mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 15g	5%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars less than 1g	
Protein 2g	

of 20-30% of fat per serving. Try eye-balling the numbers too. In this example, 50% of the total calories (160) would be 80, so you know right off the bat that the fat % in this 90 fat calorie serving will be more than 50%.

It is also important to note that the % Daily Value of fat should NOT be used as a guide for the total fat % in a serving – this number is based on a 2,000 calorie a day diet and goes by a completely different set of calculated measures.

Fat Sources We know for sure that there are 10 grams of total fat in a 1 oz. serving of Fritos, 1.5 of them coming from saturated fat and no more than that. Since trans-fats are listed as zero on the panel, logic would dictate that the balance of fat remaining comes from the poly- and monounsaturated kinds.

Down the road, there is a big chance that manufacturers will be required to include the breakdowns for all fats per serving. Some already are doing so. For example, a 1 Tbsp. serving of Crisco Corn Oil has: 2 g of Saturated Fat, 8 g of Polyunsaturated Fat and 4 g of Monounsaturated Fat, which equals the 14 total fat grams listed on their nutrition label. No trans-fat is listed and the total fat grams add up!

FAT WRAP

The list below is a summary of packaging and label terms commonly seen with regards to the fat content in foods. In order for a manufacturer to use any altered fat claims on a product, the following criteria must be met on a per serving basis.

- Lean** Less than 10 grams of fat, 4.5 grams or less of saturated fat and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol/100 grams
- Extra Lean** Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat and less than 95 milligrams of cholesterol/100 grams
- Low Fat** 3 grams of fat or less
- Reduced Fat** At least 25% less fat
- Light** 50% less fat and sodium, and 1/3 less calories
- Fat Free** Less than 0.5 grams of fat
- Reduced Cholesterol** At least 25% less cholesterol
- Cholesterol Free** Less than 2 milligrams cholesterol and 2 grams of or less of saturated fat
- Healthy** Servings must be low in fats, saturated fats and have limited amounts of cholesterol and sodium.

Make label reading as easy as you can on yourself. When it comes to fat, *look for and stick to 3 grams of fat per serving and under 1 gram of saturated fat.* Don't expect the label to tell all. Our goal as knowledgeable consumers should be to keep saturated and trans-fat intakes as low as possible and stick to foods with healthier fat sources. Choose wisely and your body will thank you.

Suzanne Dal Lago specializes in weight loss and weight control. She helps her clients deal with emotional eating and lifestyle changes, coaching them every step of the way. Suzanne does not advocate diets, fasting, measuring, buying special foods or any other short-term minded weight loss strategies. Contact her at 630-543-4655 or by email at: Suzanne0812@aol.com.

Ant Tip

One of our staff members recently found herself battling a barrage of those little itty bitty ants that sometimes find their way inside your home. She researched solutions on the internet and was shocked to see the number of pages devoted in cyberspace to the topic of getting rid of ants. Everything from bordering the floors with coffee grounds, pepper or cornmeal, to making home concoctions of boiled Karo syrup, water and borax and drawing a line around the area of entry because "ants won't cross chalk".

Desperate to get rid of the ant convention taking place on a piece of dry dog food in the middle of her kitchen floor, she opted for the quickest solution she found: aerosol air freshener and specifically, freshener with "Neutra Air" in it of which she readily had on hand. The spray worked on contact sending the tiny culprits to that big ant hill in the sky.