

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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How Much is Too Much?

We can look at all the numbers on a Nutrient Facts label, but if we don't know what the numbers should be, they don't help us much. How much is too much? Or too little? What's the most important number? Sometimes that's hard to say, because we each have slightly different nutrient needs. But there are some general guidelines to remember as you make your choices. Several weeks ago this column discussed sugars on food labels. Here are a few guidelines for fats on a label.

As with sugar, always look at the number of servings in the package. If the label says there are 2 servings, but you intend to eat or drink the whole container yourself, then you must multiply all the rest of the numbers by 2.

The healthy recommendation is to **limit the calories we get from fat to less than 30% of our total calories**. How do you figure *that*, standing in the aisle with people trying to get past your cart? Here's an easy way. Look at the number of calories in one serving. That should be about the 3<sup>rd</sup> line on the label. Then look at the number of grams of total fat in one serving. That should be just a few lines lower.

For **each 100 calories, you can have 3 g of fat** and still be under 30%. So a food that has 200 calories per serving could have as much as 6 g of total fat. One with 300 calories could have 9 g of fat. The lower the number of grams of saturated fat there is, the better. If there is more, then you are looking at a high fat food. If you want to go ahead and eat it anyway, keep everything else that day very low fat.

Next, look at what kind of fat the food contains. There are two important kinds.

There should be a line for **saturated fat**. If you are at all concerned about cholesterol, or if your doctor has told you that your cholesterol levels are high, then this is the most important line on the label. This is the kind of fat our livers turn into cholesterol. So watch out for it, and keep it low.

At most, a 40 year old, moderately active woman who needs about 2000 calories a day should not eat more than 20 g of saturated fat in the whole day. Her 44 year old, moderately active husband should not eat more than 26 g in a day. Remember, if you will eat 3 times what the label calls '1 serving', then you must multiply the number on the label by 3. So a snack that provides 10 g of saturated fat is much too high. That's half your daily allowance in one snack!

The next line on the label should be for *trans fats*. It doesn't matter how many calories there are in a serving, this number should be as low as possible. Zero is best. Many recipes today have been changed to eliminate the trans fat. If the brand of a food you usually buy has several grams of trans fat, check the labels of some other brands or similar foods. If you can find one with 0 or 1 g, that's much healthier. Try to keep the total amount of trans fat you eat in a day under 15 g.

Finally, if you read the ingredient list, there are a couple of fats to watch out for. If you see palm kernel oil or coconut oil in the list, try to find another food. Both of these are vegetable oils, but they have a lot of saturated fat.

Don't worry if there is any partially hydrogenated oil. This used to be a source of trans fats. But now oils can be partially hydrogenated without making trans fats. Or the trans fats can be removed before the oil is added to the food. The only way to tell if there are a significant amount of trans fats is to read the line in the Facts box.

Here's a very low fat and low sodium dish for dinner. It serves 8, so if your family

is smaller, cut the ingredients in half and bake in an 8 x 8 inch pan. High heat toughens low fat cheese, so put the last layer of cheese on at the end to keep it soft. Enjoy!

### Chicken Tortilla 'Lasagna'

8 corn tortillas	1 cup canned tomatoes with green chilies, or
1 C plain, non-fat yogurt	salsa, as hot as you prefer
2-3 tsp chili powder or taco seasoning	2-3 cloves garlic, minced or mashed
1 small onion, finely chopped	3 C diced, cooked chicken
2 C grated non-fat or low-fat cheddar cheese	

Preheat oven to 350° F. Toast tortillas on oven rack until crisp. Combine salsa, yogurt, chili powder or taco seasoning, garlic and onion. Spray a 9 x 13 inch baking pan with pan spray. Arrange 4 toasted tortillas in bottom of pan. Spread half the sauce on the tortillas, then half the chicken and half the cheese. Add the rest of the tortillas, then the chicken and sauce. Bake uncovered for 25 minutes. Sprinkle last of cheese over casserole and return to oven for 5 min, or just until cheese is softened. Serves 8.

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