



It all adds up

Check out the calorie count of your favorite food or drink – it might surprise you

It's Sunday afternoon, and you're grocery shopping. You wander the aisles, check off items on your list and fill up your cart.

As you choose what to buy, do you look at the nutrition label? If you take a few seconds to scan the calorie count, you might be surprised. Certain items that you think are low in calories might be loaded with sugar and sweeteners.

How can you make sure that what you're buying is the healthiest option? We'll help you figure it out so you can make the best choices for you and your family.

Read the nutrition label when shopping

The calorie count is near the top of the Nutrition Facts label. It's important to remember that the calories listed here are only for **one** serving. The serving size is also at the top of the label and tells you how much one person should have for one serving. Make sure you look at the servings per container. This can be more than one. Let's say you bought a box of macaroni and cheese with two servings and ate it all in one sitting. You'd have to double the calorie count to get your total number of calories.

Here's a general guide to calories per serving:¹

- 40 calories is low
- 100 calories is moderate
- 400 calories or more is high

This guide is based on a diet of 2,000 calories a day. If your daily diet has too many calories, you're at higher risk for being overweight and obese.¹

Some fact and fiction about “healthy” foods

Isn't a bagel just a bagel?

You might think a bagel or muffin for breakfast isn't too bad. However, dietitians say the size of many bagels and muffins has doubled in recent years.² That means more calories. Consider half a bagel or muffin – and go easy on the spread.

What about a salad? That's healthy, right?

While lettuce is low in calories, topping it with fatty dressings, bacon bits and cheese can make the calorie count really add up.

Here are some ways to order a healthy salad:

- Pick and choose what you want in your salad. For example, you can ask to hold the cheese or bacon bits.
- Try healthier salad toppings like kidney beans, extra veggies, or lean protein like skinless chicken.
- Get the dressing on the side, choose light dressings, and “fork dip” instead of pouring it on.

If I have just one serving for dinner when I eat out, that's OK?

Not necessarily. Portions served at restaurants can be two or three times larger than the standard serving size. One way to cut down on calories (and save money!) is to share a main course. Or eat half and save the rest for lunch the next day.

Watch what you drink

It's not just what you eat that can rack up the calories. Check out these common drinks. Cover up the "Calories" column and see if you can guess the calorie count.

Next, try some of the options under "Try this instead" to cut your calorie intake.

If you usually have ... Drink	Calories	Try this instead ... Drink	Calories
Large coffee with cream and sugar	240	Small coffee (10 ounces) with cream and sugar	120
Cola (20 ounces)	230	Bottle of water	0
Sweetened lemon iced tea (16 ounces)	180	Sparkling water with natural lemon flavor (not sweetened)	0

Source: New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, *Hidden Calories in Drinks* (October 2010): dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/nhp/adults/documents/hidden-calories.pdf.

There's an app for that, right?

If you're eating out, you may not have access to the Nutrition Facts labels. No worries. If you have a smartphone, you can use an app to look up the calorie count of many foods. Just look for a "calorie counter" app.

Gotta have your coffee or smoothie fix? Here's how to indulge without going overboard on the calories.²

- **Do a little homework:** Before hitting a coffee shop or smoothie stand, check their website to see how many calories are in your favorite drink.
- **Skip the whipped cream:** This can add tons of calories and fat to your drink.
- **Ask for fat-free (skim) milk:** Instead of whole milk, order fat-free milk. Did you know that steamed milk comes out best when made from fat-free milk?
- **Just say no to syrup:** Flavored syrups like vanilla and hazelnut are full of sugar and add lots of calories. If you have a sweet tooth, ask for powdered cinnamon or nutmeg – they don't add calories.
- **Order a "skinny" coffee:** This is made with nonfat milk and uses sugar-free flavorings.

Sugar by any other name³

When you scan the ingredient list, are you only looking for "sugar"? If you're not careful, you might miss a sweetener with just as many calories as sugar. Here's what to watch for:

- High-fructose corn syrup
- Fruit juice concentrate
- Corn sweetener
- Corn syrup
- Honey
- Syrup
- Sucrose
- Fructose
- Dextrose
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Molasses
- Brown sugar
- Sorbitol

1 U.S. Food and Drug Administration, *How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label* (November 2004): fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackaging/Labeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm274593.htm.

2 WebMD, *Hidden Calorie Countdown* (December 2003): webmd.com.

3 New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, *Hidden Calories in Drinks* (October 2010): dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/nhp/adults/documents/hidden-calories.pdf.

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