

# How to read a food label Part 2: Fat and cholesterol

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When your doctor or health care provider says you need to lower your cholesterol level, it is important to consume foods low in fat, especially saturated fat.

Cholesterol is a soft, waxy substance the body uses for its health and brain function. Too much cholesterol, however, increases the risk for cardiovascular disease (heart attacks and strokes). Saturated fat, which most directly increases your cholesterol, is found in meat, whole-fat dairy products, and many snack foods.

Trans fats are found in oils, margarines, shortenings.

When looking at a food label, beware of foods high in dietary cholesterol. These, which include organ meats (ie, liver), egg yolks, and dairy fats, also tend to raise blood cholesterol.

The healthy fats are mostly unsaturated. Unsaturated fats help keep cholesterol low and can be found in fish such as salmon, as well as nuts, olives and avocados. Poly- and monounsaturated fats are subgroups of unsaturated fat and also are relatively healthy when used in moderation. Other unsaturated fats include olive and canola oil, and fatty ocean fish.

Below is the food label from Smuckers Creamy Natural peanut butter. Remember from my previous article (How to read a food label Part 1: Serving Size and Calories) to first look at the serving size. In this example one serving is two tablespoons. Typically when we make a PB & J sandwich we use more than two tablespoons. The next time you dish out your PB, use a measuring spoon to help gauge how much you are using.

| Nutrition Facts  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Serving Size 2 Tbsp (32 g)                               |              |
| Servings Per Container About 14                          |              |
| Amount per Serving                                       |              |
| Calories 210   |              |
| Calories from Fat 140                                    |              |
| % Daily Value*   |              |
| Total Fat 16g  | 25%          |
| Saturated Fat 2.5g                                       | 12%          |
| Trans Fat 0g   |              |
| Polyunsaturated Fat 4.5g                                 |              |
| Monounsaturated Fat 9g                                   |              |
| Cholesterol 0mg  | 0%           |
| Sodium 105mg   | 4%           |
| Total Carbohydrate 6g                                    | 2%           |
| Dietary Fiber 2g   | 9%           |
| Sugars 1g  |              |
| Protein 7g   |              |
| Vitamin A 0%   | Vitamin C 0% |
| Calcium 0%   | Iron 2%      |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. |              |

With your two allotted tablespoons, take note at how much is saturated versus unsaturated (both poly- and monounsaturated) fat. Peanut butter, generally, is indeed high in fat and protein, but it contains some of the healthier unsaturated fats and is low in cholesterol.

Let's now look at a Hardees Little Thickburder food label. This is high in saturated fat, 10 grams in fact, and if you eat two of them that is the only food eat in one day, considering a percent daily value of 50 percent.

| Hardee's - Little Thickburger with cheese                    |                   |      |                  |
|--|-------------------|------|------------------|
| Nutrition  | Amount/serving    | %DV* | Amount/serving   |
| Facts  |                   |      |                  |
| Serv. Size 185 g   | Total Fat 24 g    | 37%  | Total Carb. 38 g |
| Servings 1   | Sat. Fat 10 g     | 50%  | Fiber 1 g        |
| Calories 470   | Trans Fat ?g      |      | Sugars 10 g      |
| Fat Cal. 220   | Cholesterol 60 mg | 20%  | Protein 23 g     |
| www.foodfacts.info   | Sodium 1130 mg    | 45%  |                  |
| *Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet |                   |      |                  |

To summarize, in considering what to eat, look at the labels (you can even access most of them on your smartphone) and choose foods lower in saturated fat and cholesterol. Get most of your calories from plant foods such as grains, fruits and vegetables. Choose vegetable oils over butter or shortening.

It is beneficial to consume two to three servings a day of fish or shellfish, lean poultry and nuts. Limit your intake of high-processed meats such as sausages, salami, bologna and instead try the low fat varieties. Avoid other processed foods such as fast food.

The American Dietetic Association has ample resources on healthy eating at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

*In the upcoming How to read a food label Part 3, we will review sugars. Stay tuned!*

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***The health information provided herein is not intended to replace the advice or discussion with a healthcare provider and is for educational purposes only. Before making any decisions regarding your health, speak with your healthcare provider.***