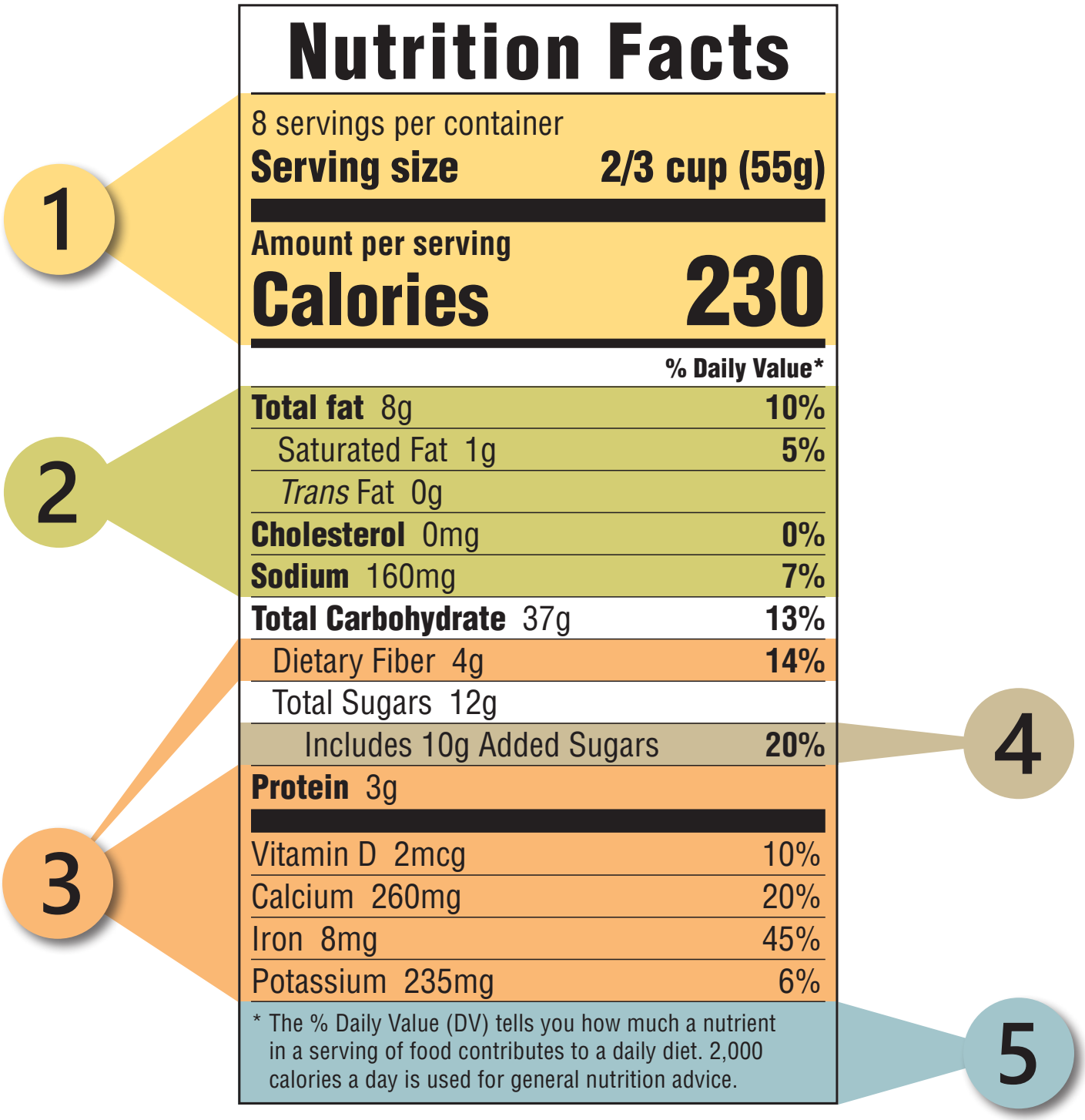
# How do I read a food label?

The following is a quick guide to reading the Nutrition Facts Panel, or food label.




Helpful guidelines on back

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## 1 Look at the serving size and total calories

The serving size will tell you the amount of one serving and how many servings there are in the package. To count calories successfully, pay attention to the serving size on the label compared to what you actually eat. For example, if the serving size of a food or beverage is one cup, and you eat two cups, you are taking in twice the calories, fat and other nutrients listed on the food label.

## 2 Limit fat, cholesterol and sodium intake

Diets higher in these nutrients are associated with an increased risk of developing health conditions, such as high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. Saturated fat and trans fat are linked to an increased risk of heart disease, so limit these in your diet. Try to take in less fat overall because it is much higher in calories.

## 3 Get more fiber, protein, vitamin D, calcium, iron and potassium

Many people do not get the recommended amount of these nutrients, and diets higher in these nutrients can reduce the risk of developing some health conditions, such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and anemia. Choose fruits and vegetables to get these nutrients.

## 4 Watch for added sugars

When you eat whole foods, like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, you are consuming sugar, but these are naturally occurring sugars. Added sugars include any sugars or sweeteners that are added to foods or beverages during processing or preparation. These sugars have no nutritional value but many added calories so it is best to reduce or eliminate these sugars whenever possible. The Nutrition Food Label now includes a category under Total Sugars called Added Sugars to help more easily identify how much sugar is added to foods.

## 5 Percent Daily Values

The percent daily values listed at the bottom of the food label are based on a 2,000-calorie diet. You can see if the food product is high or low in a certain nutrient and how much it contributes to your daily recommended allowance. Any nutrient that is 5% daily value or less is low, and any nutrient that is 20% daily value or more is high.

### Don't forget to check the ingredients list

Food companies must list the ingredients in descending order by weight. This means that the ingredient that weighs the most is first and the ingredient that weighs the least is last.

Get into the habit of reading food labels. It's a little box, but it's full of information. Reading the labels will help you balance your diet and get the nutrients you need each day.

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