

[Read the labels, and fill your cart with the most nutritious foods](#)

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It all starts in the grocery store. The foods you choose to [stock your pantry](#) , [refrigerator, and freezer](#) are the foundation for your diet.

Grocery shopping can be daunting. It can be overwhelming to try to choose the healthiest foods from among all the options that line every aisle. And new trends and choices pop up every day, from fortified foods to upscale gourmet.

To help you navigate the supermarket, here are some expert tips to help you [read food labels](#) and choose healthy products. We've also got a top 10 list of nutritious foods to add to your grocery cart.

Label Reading Tips

The first thing you'll see is the label on the front of the food package. Manufacturers can say most anything they want on the front label (to get the real story, see the Nutrition Facts panel on the back). Here are some terms you may see there, and what they really mean:

- **Fortified, enriched, added, extra, and plus.** This means nutrients such as minerals and fiber have been removed and vitamins added in processing. Look for 100% whole-wheat bread and high-fiber, low-sugar cereals.
- **Fruit drink.** This means there's probably little or no real fruit, and lots of sugar. Look for

products that say "100% Fruit Juice."

- **Made with wheat, rye, or multigrain.** These products may have very little whole grain. Look for the word "whole" before the grain to ensure you're getting a 100% whole-grain product.
- **Natural.** The manufacturer started with a natural source, but once it's processed the food may not resemble anything natural. Look for "100% All Natural" and "No Preservatives."
- **Organically grown, pesticide-free, or no artificial ingredients.** Trust only labels that say "Certified Organically Grown."
- **Sugar-free or fat-free.** Don't assume the product is low-calorie. The manufacturer may have compensated with unhealthy ingredients that don't taste very good -- and have no fewer calories than the real thing.

Here are some key phrases you'll see on the Nutrition Facts panel on the back of the package:

- **Serving Size.** Portion control is important for [weight management](#), but don't expect manufacturers to make it easy for you. Pop-Tarts, for instance, come two to a package. The label says one serving is 200 calories -- for "one pastry."
- **Calories and Calories From Fat.** This tells you how many calories are in a serving, and how many of those calories come from fat. Remember that this information is for one serving as defined on the label.
- **Nutrients by Weight and Percentage of Daily Value (%DV).** This shows how much of each nutrient is in one serving, by weight in grams and by %DV. This symbol refers to the recommended daily allowance for a nutrient based on a 2,000-calorie diet (some nutrients, such as sugar and protein, don't have a %DV). Fats are listed as "Total Fat" and also broken down so you can see how much is unhealthy saturated fat and trans fat.
- **Vitamins and Minerals.** [Vitamins and minerals](#) are listed by %DV only. Pay particular attention to vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and iron; most Americans don't get enough in their diets.
- **Ingredients.** They're listed in order from the greatest amount to the least. Experts offer a rule of thumb: the fewer the ingredients, the better.

Top 10 Foods to Put on Your Grocery List

Here are some foods that experts say should be on any health-conscious shopper's grocery list:

- **Tomatoes.** These juicy, red fruits are loaded with the antioxidant lycopene, which has been shown to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease in women.
- **Low-fat proteins.** Good sources of lean protein include seafood, skinless white-meat

poultry, eggs, lean beef (tenderloin, sirloin, eye of round), and skim or low-fat yogurts, milk, and cheeses. Some research has indicated that a diet moderately high in protein can keep hunger at bay, and thus help you lose weight.

- **Whole grains, oats, and fibrous foods.** Fiber helps your digestive tract work properly and lowers cholesterol levels while keeping your belly feeling full. Whole grains also contain antioxidants, are fat free, and are easy to fit into your diet.

- **Berries** (red and blue), including grapes. Berries are loaded with vitamins and minerals, as well as phytochemicals with cancer-fighting properties. Red grapes, in the form of one glass of red wine daily, may even reduce the risk of heart disease, according to the American Heart Association. (If you're a nondrinker, check with a doctor before starting.)

- **Nuts.** A handful of almonds, cashews, pecans, or walnuts provides fiber, vitamin E, and healthful, monounsaturated fats. Just watch your portion size; these nutritious nuggets are high in calories.

- **Fish and fish oil** contain omega-3 fatty acids that can reduce the risk of heart disease by protecting the heart against inflammation. The American Heart Association recommends eating fatty fish such as salmon, mackerel, tuna, or sardines at least twice a week.

- **Unsaturated fats** such as olive, canola, and soybean oils are the best kind of fats.

- **Low-fat dairy products** provide plenty of calcium to help keep bones and teeth strong, are a great source of protein, and may even enhance weight loss, according to some research.

- **Vegetables** are a healthful eater's best friend. All veggies, except avocados, are fat-free and loaded with disease-fighting phytochemicals.

- **Legumes** (like pinto, garbanzo, kidney and black beans and lentils) are underrated. The lowly bean is naturally fat free and loaded with protein, fiber, vitamins, and minerals, especially iron. They add few calories, but keep you feeling full.