

BE A LABEL READER

Find out more about what you are eating by learning to read the information on food products.

Step 1: Read the Nutritional Panel

Sometimes it is not clear from the ingredient list whether a product is suitable or not. It is often helpful to read the Nutrition Panel. General guidelines for making healthy choices have been suggested below. Some foods may not fit these guidelines but still may be healthy choices.

Serve sizes differ between products, compare foods by looking at the 100g column.

Beware the manufacturer's serve size may not be the serve size you are eating. Always look at the 'per 100g' column.

FAT

Total Aim for less than 10g per 100g *
For milk and yoghurt less than 2g per 100g is best

Saturated Aim for as low as possible

Trans Aim for less than 1g per 100g for margarine

* Oils and margarines have a high fat content. Choose poly and mono-unsaturated varieties and use sparingly.

Nutritional Information		
Serves per can: 3.5	Serving size: 125g	
	Per serve	Per 100g
ENERGY (calories) (kilojoules)	121cal 506kj	97cal 405kj
PROTEIN	6.5g	5.2g
FAT		
<i>total</i>	0.6g	0.5g
<i>saturated</i>	0.2g	0.4g
CARBOHYDRATE		
<i>total</i>	24.0g	19.2g
<i>sugars</i>	4.0g	3.2g
DIETARY FIBRE	7.8g	6.2g
SODIUM	416mg	330mg

CARBOHYDRATE

Sugars
Aim for less than 10g per 100g.

In foods containing added fruit, aim for less than 25g per 100g.

SALT

Aim for less than 400mg per 100g and if possible less than 120mg per 100g
Look for 'no added salt' or 'salt reduced'.

DIETARY FIBRE

Aim for more than 5g per 100g in breads, cereals and cracker biscuits.

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Step 2: Read the ingredients list

Ingredients are listed in order of quantity from the most to the least. Look for fat, sugar and salt. If these are listed well down the ingredient list, the product will probably be suitable.

Example 1

Rye bread

Ingredients: unbleached flour, rye flour, rye meal, baker's yeast, gluten, salt, vinegar, vegetable oil, soy flour, semolina, roasted barley malt, oat bran, cultured whey, dry acid whey, emulsifiers (481, 472(e), 471), sugar, vitamin (thiamine), water added.

Example 2

Chocolate Jaffa Cookies

Ingredients: wheat flour, margarine (contains animal fat), milk solids non-fat, flavours, compound chocolate, sugar.

If fat or sugar is at the top of the list the product may not be a good choice. Refer to the nutritional panel if you are not sure.

Step 3: Look for Hidden Ingredients

Sometimes ingredients may be listed by a name you are not familiar with. Check the list below.


Fat	Sugar	Fibre	Salt
Animal fat	Fructose	Whole wheat	Salt
Shortening	Lactose	Whole meal	Sodium
Beef fat	Honey	Whole grain	Rock salt
Lard	Sucrose	Bran	Sea salt
Dripping	Sugar, raw sugar	Wheat bran	Onion salt
Cream	Invert sugar	Barley bran	Celery salt
Butter fat	Glucose syrup	Rolled oats	Garlic salt
Tallow	Malt, malt extract	Barley	Booster
Coconut oil	Dextrose	Oat bran	MSG (Monosodium
Palm oil	Treacle	Wheatmeal	Glutamate)
Vegetable fat	Golden syrup	Rye	Meat / vegetable extract
Chocolate	Molasses	Buckwheat	Stock cubes
Monoglycerides	Maple syrup	Hi-maize starch	Sodium bicarbonate
Milk solids	Glucose syrup	Resistant starch	Baking powder
Hydrogenated oils	Brown sugar		Sodium metabisulphite
Margarine	Corn syrup		
Chocolate or carob coating	Concentrated fruit juice		
Seeds, nuts & coconut			

Healthy Eating and Diabetes

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Nutritional claims – what do they really mean?

Many claims are made on food labels. Make sure you know which are suitable for you.

Health claim	Suitable?	Comment	Example
97% fat free	Low fat choice, but need to check sugar, salt & fibre	Contains 3gms fat per 100g	97% fat free mayonnaise
25% reduced fat	Misleading	25% less fat than the regular product – could still be high fat	Reduced fat cheese
Low fat	Low fat choice, but need to check other nutrients	Low in fat compared to regular product	Low fat milk
'Cholesterol Free' or 'Low Cholesterol'	Misleading	Cholesterol is only found in animal products – the product may still be high in plant fats and kilojoules	Any vegetable oil or margarine – eg olive oil, Flora
Mono or poly unsaturated	? Check label for total fat	Preferred to saturated fat – check the total fat content	Mono or poly unsaturated oil or margarine
'Toasted' or 'Baked'	Misleading	Usually cooked with fat – check the fat content	Toasted muesli
Lite or light	Misleading	May refer to taste, texture or colour – check the label	Light olive oil
	? Check the label. Usually a good choice.	The product meets standards for saturated fat, trans fat and salt. Total sugar and energy content may be high. Check the panel.	Various margarines or oils
Reduced fat	Misleading	May still be high fat even if fat content is reduced	Reduced fat biscuits, cheeses
No added sugar	? Check the label	No added sucrose, but other sugars may be used – eg honey	Confectionary
Carbohydrate modified	Misleading	Use alternatives to sweeten which may still contain kilojoules and can affect BGL's, often high in fat	Imported "Diabetic" chocolate, some sugar free lollies
'No added salt' or 'Salt Reduced'	? Check the label	This can mean no salt added or the salt content reduced compared to the original product	Some canned foods
Natural or health food	Misleading	Oil, fat, cream and sugar are all natural – read the label carefully!	Nut bars
Low joule or diet	Yes, good choice	Low in kilojoules & often sweetened with artificial sweeteners	Diet soft drink, diet cordial, diet jam
	? Check the label	An approved GI testing facility has tested the food for its glycaemic index. The food may have a high, medium or low GI. The actual GI value and its meaning will appear near the symbol or nutrition panel. Check the GI value and other nutrients eg fat content	Some breads and cereals

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Food Labelling Laws

Nutrition Panel

Under current laws, nearly all manufactured foods carry a nutrition panel. The information must be presented in a standard format that shows the amount per serve and per 100gm (or 100ml if liquid) of the food.

Foods that do not require to bear a nutritional panel include fresh fruit and vegetables, foods not sold in a package, foods contained within very small packages, single ingredient foods – eg tea and coffee – and food made and packaged from the premises from which it is sold.

Percentage of Key Ingredients

The percentage of key ingredients in a product is shown on the label – eg the percentage of strawberries in strawberry jam.

Saturated Fat Content

The saturated fat content of the food is displayed on the nutrition panel. Previously manufacturers were only required to display the **total** fat content on the packet, not the saturated fat content.

Trans Fats

Under current laws, manufacturers are not required to display the trans fatty acid content on a label, unless a claim is made about it.

Declaration of Presence of Allergens

Foods, food ingredients or components of an ingredient that can cause severe adverse reactions in some individuals – such as peanuts and other nuts, seafood, fish, milk, gluten, eggs and soybeans – must be declared on the label, however small the amount.

Date Marking

Foods that must be eaten before a certain time for safety reasons are date marked with a 'use by' date and these foods should not be sold or eaten after this date – eg infant formula. Most other foods are marked with a 'best before' date. It may still be safe to eat these foods after the 'best before' date but they may have lost some quality. Foods that have a 'best before' date can continue to be sold after the date provided the food is fit for human consumption.

