

FOOD LABELS WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



 dietflex

 LOZ life

Most nutritional advice recommends that we should read the labels of any packaged foods in order to make the best choices. Unfortunately, many people either don't have a clear idea of what information they're looking for, or the manufacturer makes claims which may well mislead.

READ THE NUTRITION INFORMATION

The nutrition panel lists a range of information which can be useful in comparing like products.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION		
① Servings per package: 3		
② Serving size: 150g		
	③ Per serving	④ Per 100g
⑤ Energy	608kJ	405kJ
⑥ Protein	4.2g	2.8g
⑦ Fat, total	7.4g	4.9g
-Saturated	4.5g	3.0g
⑧ Carbohydrate total	18.6g	12.4g
-Sugars	18.6g	12.4g
⑨ Sodium	90mg	60mg
* Percentage of recommended dietary intake		
⑩ Ingredients: Whole milk, concentrated skim milk, sugar, strawberries (9%), gelatine, culture, thickener (1442).		
All quantities above are averages.		

- ① **Servings per package** – be aware that many items have a serving size which is much smaller than what you might expect; this is so that their nutrition claims can be honestly made (eg less than 100 calories per serve).
- ② **Serving size** – this gives an accurate idea of the amount you would eat in order to consume the nutrients stated.
- ③ **Quantity per serving** – the specific nutrients supplied through a single serving of that food.

- ④ **Quantity per 100g** – the specific nutrients supplied through 100g of the food, regardless of the serving size. This can be directly converted to a percentage (eg in this example sugars are 12.4g/100g, so this means 12.4% sugar.)
- ⑤ **Energy** – given in the metric measurement of kilojoules, but may also include the imperial measurement of calories.
- ⑥ **Protein** – lists the grams of protein in the product per serve and per 100g.
- ⑦ **Fat** – this must be listed as total and also have the saturated fat amount listed (if the product contains any saturated fat). Trans fats must also be listed if they are present in the product.
- ⑧ **Carbohydrate** – this must be listed as total and also have the amount of sugar listed, regardless of whether the sugar is naturally occurring or added. In this example it is added sugar (the third ingredient listed) as well as naturally occurring sugars from the milk and the different fruits included in the product.
- ⑨ **Sodium** – this lists the milligrams of sodium in the product per serve and per 100g.
- ⑩ **Ingredients** – all ingredients must be listed in descending order; that is the first listed ingredient is the most abundant in the product with the last ingredient being the least.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Check that the serving size is realistic for you. A product which you assume to be a single serve may, according to the nutrition information, be intended to serve 2 or 3.

2. Aim for products with:

- more fibre
- more protein
- the lowest sugar content
- the fewest ingredients
- more nutrients per calorie/kilojoule

DO NOT EAT:

- sweeteners containing calories
- hydrogenated fat or oil
- trans-fats
- vegetable oils

INTERPRETING FOOD LABELS

Here's a handy guide to those on-pack nutrition claims that catch your eye when shopping.

97% FAT-FREE

WHAT IT MEANS	The food has 3% fat (the rest is carbohydrate, water, protein and minor things with no fat).
WHERE IT IS	Biscuits, oven fries, sauces, snacks and frozen dinners.

BAKED NOT FRIED

WHAT IT MEANS	Implies that the food is low in fat. For some snacks, like pretzels, this is true but for others, like biscuit snacks, it means they are lower in fat (around 25%) but not necessarily low in fat. Check the nutrition information panel for the grams of fat per serve.
WHERE IT IS	Savoury biscuits, salty snack foods, pretzels, biscuits, oven-bake chips.

3. Avoid Foods

- with many ingredients that you are not familiar with.
- which come in packages. Following an eating plan based on fresh foods means that you don't need to read labels. What to look for in these foods when comparing brands or types

Bread – highest fibre and protein, lowest carbohydrate, fewest ingredients

Yoghurt – lowest sugar and calories, highest protein and calcium, fewest ingredients

Cheese – lowest sugar and calories, highest protein and calcium, fewest ingredients

Crackers – lowest sugar and sodium, fewest ingredients
Breakfast cereals – lowest sugar, fewest ingredients

LITE/LIGHT

WHAT IT MEANS	Usually contains 25-33% less fat or kilojoules than the regular product.
WHERE IT IS	Cheese, milk, butter, spread, cream cheese, sour cream, olive oil, beer and potato chips.

NO CHOLESTEROL

WHAT IT MEANS	It does not mean 'no fat', and does not mean that it is a healthier product than the regular version. It may be, but it may not be. Any food made from plants can claim this as only animal foods (like meat and milk) carry cholesterol.
WHERE IT IS	Potato crisps, corn chips, oils, margarines, nuts, pies, pastries, biscuits, sauces and donuts.

VEGETABLE OIL

WHAT IT MEANS	Vegetable oil usually means cheap tropical oil with 50% saturated fat which keeps well.
WHERE IT IS	Potato crisps, kettle chips, instant noodles, fried fast foods, hot chips, donuts, biscuits, and toasted muesli.

NO ARTIFICIAL COLOURS

WHAT IT MEANS	Can still contain natural or naturederived colours such as caramel (150) and carotene (160a). These have generally not been associated with intolerance problems in children.
WHERE IT IS	Soft drinks, cordials, jelly crystals, snack foods, confectionery and foods aimed at children.

NO MSG

WHAT IT MEANS	Can be misleading as there are natural glutamates present in many foods, especially protein foods. This claim really means 'No added MSG'.
WHERE IT IS	Soups, sauces, pre-prepared meals, stocks, bbq and cheese-flavoured chips and noodles.

DIET

WHAT IT MEANS	Sweetened without sugar and contains either no fat or is very low in fat. The total kilojoules will be the lowest in that category of food. Artificial sweeteners may disrupt weight loss efforts, so the word 'diet' does not give freedom to enjoy that food on a regular basis.
WHERE IT IS	Yogurt, soft drinks, chewing gum and lollies..

