

How to read food labels

Food labels provide nutritional information to help people make healthy choices. When reading labels on food products, look for these four main nutrients:

- Fat
- Sodium (salt)
- Sugars
- Fibre

You should also take note of the number of kilojoules or calories (energy) the food product contains.

Step 1:

Look at the ingredients list

- Ingredients are listed in order of quantity from the most to the least, excluding water.
- Look for foods with sources of fat, sugar and salt – the further down the list these ingredients are, the healthier the food choice.

Step 2:

Look at the nutrition information panel

- The nutrition information panel on food products gives you important information about the energy (kilojoules), fat, sugar, salt and fibre content of foods. This allows you to compare different foods and make healthier choices.
- Serving sizes often vary between brands. When comparing food products, use the per 100mL or per 100g columns to make sure you are comparing the same quantity of different food products.

An example of a nutrition label

| NUTRITION INFORMATION | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Servings per package: 4 | | |
| Serving size: 40 g (1 slice) | | |
| | Quantity per serving | Quantity per 100g |
| Energy | 700 kJ | 1,750 kJ |
| Protein | 4.4 g | 11 g |
| Fat, total | 8.6 g | 21.5 g |
| — saturated | 3.6 g | 6.5 g |
| Carbohydrates, total | 28.4 g | 71 g |
| — sugars | 12.1 g | 30.5 g |
| Sodium | 80 mg | 200 mg |
| Dietary fibre | 1.2 g | 6.0 g |

Ingredients: rolled oats (80%), sugar, wheat, apple pieces (8%) [sugar, water, apple concentrate, dextrose, colour (160(b)), vegetable gum (401), food acid (331)], glucose syrup, vegetable oil, rice starch, salt, emulsifier (soy lecithin).

This product may contain traces of nuts.

- The average adult needs approximately 8,700kJ of energy in their daily diet. Knowing the energy content of foods can help you track your intake and maintain a healthy body weight.
- It is important to look at the fat content of foods. Saturated fats are the bad fats and these need to be limited.
- Sugar is very low in nutrients but high in kilojoules. Choosing foods low in sugar can help you maintain a healthy body weight.
- Most of the salt in our diet comes from processed and packaged foods. Choose 'reduced-salt' or 'low-salt' food options.
- Fibre is important in keeping the digestive system healthy. The average adult should aim for 25-30g per day.

The table below outlines acceptable intake quantities for each of the four nutrients

| Per 100g | Healthier Eat more often 😊 | OK Eat in moderation 😐 | Least healthy Limit intake 😞 |
|---------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Total fat | 3g or less | 3g - 20g | 20g or more |
| Saturated fat | 1.5g or less | 1.5g - 5g | 5g or more |
| Sugar | 5g or less | 5g - 15g | 15g or more |
| Sodium | 120mg or less | 120mg - 600mg | 600mg or more |

Choose foods with more than 4g of fibre per serve.

