



**Read Food
Labels for
Healthier
Choices**

HealthPro

Read Food Labels for a Healthier Choice

The following booklet gives an overview of the information that may be found on food labels. By law specific information must always be given on food labels however manufacturers may always opt to provide more information.

Taking note of food labels is important and may help you make the healthier choice when choosing between different food products.



Ingredients

The ingredients are a list of the individual foods used to make the food product. They are usually listed according to the amounts used, starting from the highest ingredient and ending with the lowest. The list of ingredients also includes additives whenever these have been used in the product. The percentage of food is also listed when the ingredient is used in the name of the product or is shown through pictures.

INGREDIENTS

Rice, wheat (whole wheat, wheat flour), sugar, gluten flour, milk powder, salt, low-fat wheat germ, aroma of malt, barley, vitamins (C, B3, B6, B2, B1, folic acid B12), iron.

Date

BEST BEFORE:

OCT 2008

This shows the durability of the product which indicates the length of time the product would remain fresh or safe to eat. Different terms such as **Use By** or **Best Before** are used in different products. The term 'Use By' is used to refer to the safety of the food eg. Milk should be 'used by' a certain date, whereas the term 'best before' is used to refer to the quality of the food eg. Frozen or tinned food will have a better flavour before its 'best before' date. Other dates shown under the terms **Sell By** or **Display Until** are to guide shop owners and staff to know when to remove a product from sale.



Name and Address of Manufacturer

This information is useful if the consumer would like to contact the manufacturer if s/he would like to make a complaint or get more information regarding the product.

Origin

Some labels may state which country the food is coming from.



Organic

This is strictly regulated by the European Union and is represented by this logo to show that the producers fulfilled the required conditions.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

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A GMO is an organism whose genetic material has altered using genetic engineering techniques. Many European consumers are demanding the right to make an informed choice about whether or not to consume GMO foods. Therefore European regulations state that all food and animal feed containing more than 0.9% of genetically modified ingredients must be listed on the food label.

Name of Product

The name of the food product must always be clearly stated. Some foods might have made-up names that would not give any information on the contents of the product. In this case a description of the food would be given to give consumers a clear understanding of the food.



Quantity

Depending on whether the food is solid or liquid, the quantity is given in weight or volume respectively. When the symbol e appears behind the weight or volume of the food, this means that the weight or volume given is an accurate average.



Health Claims



EU regulations ensure that any health claims made on food packages are truthful and based on scientific facts. A few health claims have been defined in order to keep the same meaning across all EU countries.

For example, a **low fat** product means that it does not contain more than 3g of fat per 100g whereas a claim such as **high in fibre** means that the product contains at least 6g of fibre per 100g.

Allergy Information

Sometimes those foods that may cause an allergy would not only be listed in the ingredients list but would also be written in bold, highlighted or enclosed in an advice box to attract the consumer's attention that a particular food is present in the product. Some examples of foods that may cause an allergy are: nuts, milk, gluten, shellfish and sesame seeds.

A circular graphic with a blue border and a yellow background. Inside, the text reads: "Allergy Advice This product contains oats. May contain traces of peanuts, other nuts & milk."

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Nutritional Information

This describes the amount of energy and nutrients in the food product. This information is usually given in values per 100g or 100ml. Some products may also show the nutritional information per serving of the particular food. The following are the nutrients that you may find on a food label: energy, carbohydrate, protein, fat, fibre and sodium/salt.

Energy: This amount is usually given in calories (kcal) or kilojoules (kJ).

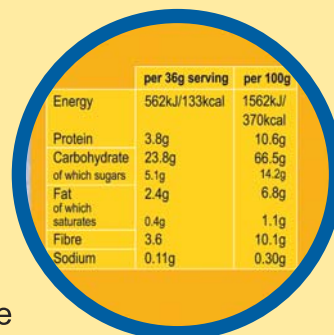
Carbohydrate: These can be **simple** (eg. Sugars and natural sugars found in fruit and milk) or **complex** (eg. Bread, cereals, pasta, rice and potatoes). Complex carbohydrates are also known as starchy foods. Sometimes food labels show carbohydrates as one value whereas others may read 'carbohydrates of which are sugars' to make a distinction between the different types of carbohydrates.

Protein: This may be listed in those foods that are rich in protein such as meat, fish, milk and dairy products, eggs and legumes.

Fat: Sometimes different types of fats, such as saturated fats, monounsaturated, polyunsaturated fats and cholesterol are listed on food labels. We must always aim to reduce our intake of saturated fats due to their negative effects on health. Those foods that are high in unsaturated fats (the 'good' fats) are: oils and spreads that are made from olive, sunflower, rapeseed and vegetable oils, oily fish, nuts and seeds.

Fibre: This can sometimes be seen on food labels. There are two types of fibre. These are **insoluble fibre** that is found in wholegrain bread, brown rice and pasta, breakfast cereals, fruits and vegetables, and **soluble fibre** that is present in oats and pulses (eg. Lentils and beans).

Sodium: Food labels may sometimes list salt as sodium. They are **NOT** the same. Salt is made up of sodium and chloride. If a product lists the amount of sodium per 100g, multiplying that amount by 2.5, will give you the amount of salt in the food product.



	per 36g serving	per 100g
Energy	562kJ/133kcal	1562kJ/370kcal
Protein	3.8g	10.6g
Carbohydrate	23.8g	66.5g
of which sugars	5.1g	14.2g
Fat	2.4g	6.8g
of which saturates	0.4g	1.1g
Fibre	3.6	10.1g
Sodium	0.11g	0.30g

Sodium X 2.5 = SALT

2g Sodium X 2.5 = 5g Salt

Due to its health risks, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** recommends a daily salt intake of 5g. This means 2g of sodium a day.

Additional Information

Food labels may sometimes give **Recommended Daily Amounts (RDA)**. These are estimates of the daily amounts of vitamins and minerals that are required to meet the needs of adults. Sometimes those food products imported from the UK, may also list **Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA)** which are based on British dietary values for the daily consumption of nutrients.

To help you make healthier choices whilst shopping, the shopping card below can be used as a guide to choose those foods that are low in sugars, fats and salt.

Remember that a product rich in fruit may be high in sugars but would still be a healthier choice.

	High per 100g	Medium per 100g	Low per 100g
Sugars	Over 15g	Between 5g-15g	5g and below
Fat (total)	Over 20g	Between 3g-20g	3g and below
Saturated Fats	Over 5g	Between 1.5g-5g	1.5g and below
Salt	Over 1.5g	Between 0.3g-1.5g	0.3g and below

Make the healthiest choice!

Reference: Food Standards Agency, 2007

Information compiled by **Petra Mallia**, Public Health Nutritionist
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