

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 ingredients list

Ingredients are listed in order of quantity from the largest to smallest.

Look for fat, sugar and salt. If these are listed well down on 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 2

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	Wholemeal	Sodium
Beef fat	Honey	Wholegrain	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	Monosodium glutamate
Palm oil	Treacle	Wheatmeal	Meat/vegetable extract
Vegetable fat	Golden syrup	Rye	MSG
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	Rolled barley	Sodium metabisulphite
Margarine	Mannitol		
Chocolate or carob coating	Sorbitol		
Seeds, nuts & coconut	Xylitol		
	Corn syrup		
	Modified carbohydrate		
	Concentr. fruit juice		

Step 3: 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.

Example: *baked beans*

Ingredients: navy beans, tomato puree, sugar, corn starch, salt, spices, citric acid, water added

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

Beware the manufacturers' serve size may not be the serve size you are eating. Always look on the 'per 100g' column.

Nutrition Information		
serves per can: 3.5	serving size 125g	
	Per serve	Per 100g
ENERGY (calories)	121cal	97cal
(kilojoules)	506kJ	405kJ
PROTEIN	6.5g	5.2g
FAT	<i>Total</i> 0.6g	0.5g
	<i>Saturated</i> 0.2g	0.1g
CARBOHYDRATE		
	<i>Total</i> 24.0g	19.2g
	<i>Sugars</i> 4.0g	3.2g
DIETARY FIBRE	7.8g	6.2g
SODIUM	416mg	330mg

Fat

Total **Low – less than 5g per 100g**
 Medium – 5 to 10g per 100g
 High – more than 10g per 100g
 For milk and yoghurt less than 2g per 100g is best

Saturated Aim for as low as possible

Trans Less than 1g per 100g

Carbohydrate

Sugars Less than 10g per 100g
 In foods containing fruit aim for less than 25g per 100g

Dietary Fibre

More than 5g per 100g
 The recommended daily intake of fibre is 30 g.

Salt (sodium)

Excellent - less than 120mg per 100g
 Good - less than 400mg per 100gms
 Look for 'no added salt' or 'salt reduced'.

Nutritional claims -what do they really mean?

100% natural!

97% fat free!

No cholesterol!

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

Health Claim	Suitable ?	Comment	Example
97% fat free	✓ Yes, low fat choice	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	✓ Yes, low fat choice	Low in fat compared to regular product	Low fat milk
No oil	✓ Yes, low fat choice	Virtually no fat	No oil salad dressings
'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 – use in small amounts as still high in kilojoules.	Mono or poly unsaturated oil or margarine
'Toasted' or 'Baked'	✗ Poor choice	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
Heart Foundation 'Pick the tick'	? Check the label	Low in saturated fat but not in total fat or sugar.	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 label	No added sucrose, but other sugars could be used eg glucose or honey	Confectionary
Carbohydrate modified	✗ Misleading	Use alternatives to sweeten which contain kilojoules and can affect BGLs, often high in fat	Imported "Diabetic" chocolate, some sugar free lollies
'No added salt' or 'Salt Reduced'	? Check 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!	Natural ice cream, Carob chocolate
Low joule or diet	✓ Yes, good choice	Low in kilojoules and often sweetened with artificial sweeteners	Diet soft drink, diet cordial, diet jam, diet jelly

New Food Labelling Laws

In December 2002, a number of changes to the labels on food packets were introduced in Australia. New food labelling laws have been developed by FSANZ, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (formerly known as ANZFA, the Australia New Zealand Food Authority) in order to provide consumers with more information about the foods that we eat.

Some of the major changes to food labels

Nutrition Panel

Until recently nutrition labelling has only been compulsory where a food makes a nutrition claim, such as 'low salt', or if a food is designed for a special purpose, such as infant formula or a sports food.

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

Foods that will not be required 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 will need to be shown on the label, eg the percentage of strawberries in strawberry jam.

Fat Saturated Content

The saturated fat content of the food will need to be displayed on the nutritional panel. Previously manufacturers were only required to display the **total** fat content on the packet, not the saturated fat content.

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.

Other foods will be 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. The majority of foods will be marked with a 'best before' date.