



Reading Food Labels

Patient Name:

Date:

Health Professional Name:

Designation:

Contact:

Being able to read food labels can help you make informed choices about the products you buy. They can tell you what you are eating, how to store and cook the product, and if the product has any ingredients that some people may be allergic to (e.g. milk, nuts, shellfish). If the product has a shelf life of less than two years, it should also show a use-by or best-before date.

The **Ingredient List** shows all ingredients in the product and is listed in order of weight. So the ingredient in the largest amount will be listed first.

The **Nutrition Information Panel** lists all the main nutrients in the food. The amount of each nutrient is listed per 100g (or per 100ml if it is a fluid) and per each serve.

Look for products highest in fibre, and lowest in total fat, saturated fat, sugars and sodium

Nutrition Information Panel (cereal)		
Serving Size: 40g		
Servings per pack: 10		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy - KJ	588	1470
- Cal	141	352
Protein (g)	2.9	7.3
Fat – Total (g)	0.7	1.7 ←
- Saturated	0.2	0.4 ←
Carbohydrate-Total (g)	28.8	72
- Sugars (g)	10	25 ←
Dietary Fibre (g)	2.9	7.3 ←
Sodium (mg)	123	308 ←
Potassium (mg)	77	193
Iron (mg)	2.7	6.7
Calcium (mg)	178	444

Fat

Try to choose products with:

- less than 10g per 100g total fat
- less than 2g per 100g saturated fat

Sugars

Try to choose products with:

- **less than 10g per 100g**
- less than 5g per 100ml for **drinks**
- less than 25g per 100g for **cereals or muesli bars that have dried fruit**

Sodium (Salt)

A low salt product is **less than 120mg per 100g**. A high salt product has more than 450mg. Try to choose those with **less than 450mg/100g**.

Fibre

Try to choose products with **more than 6g per 100g dietary fibre**

When comparing products, always use the “per 100g” or “per 100ml” columns, rather than the “per serve” column, as serving sizes can vary between products.

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Nutrition and **health claims** can also appear on products, but the product must meet certain criteria to be able to make a claim. Below are some examples of claims you may see on products.

Nutrition claim	What it means
98% Fat Free	These products have only 2% fat but may still be high in sugar and/or salt (sodium) e.g. some crackers, sweets.
'Lite' or 'Light'	These may have less energy, fat, sugar and/or salt but the term 'lite' may be referring to the colour or flavour e.g. 'Lite' Olive oil – lighter colour. 'Lite' yoghurt – may be lower in sugar or fat.
Low Fat	These products are low in fat but could be high in sugar e.g. some low fat muesli.
Reduced Fat	The fat content is lower than the standard product but may still be a high fat snack product, e.g. reduced fat potato chips still contain a lot of fat.
No Added Sugar	The product will have no sugar 'added' but may be high in 'natural' sugars e.g. fruit juice.
'No Added Salt' or 'Salt Reduced'	This means that no salt is added or the salt content is reduced compared to the original product e.g. no added salt peanut butter, salt reduced baked beans.
Cholesterol Free	Often written on foods that may never have cholesterol in anyway, e.g. rice and sunflower oils. Cholesterol in foods has little effect on your blood cholesterol.
'Diet'	These products are often sweetened with artificial sweeteners and therefore have little or no calories e.g. diet soft drinks.
Low Glycaemic Index (GI)	 <p>Glycaemic index is an indication of how quickly carbohydrates are digested and absorbed in the body. Low GI foods are not always everyday healthy food choices. They may still be high in sugar, fat and/or calories e.g. chocolate.</p>
Gluten free	 <p>This means gluten (a protein found in food) has not been detected in these products. They may also have the "crossed grain logo" (pictured) meaning it has been approved by Coeliac NZ as being safe for people who need gluten free food.</p>

This information sheet has been developed for use by Waitematā DHB Dietitians. It may be used by other healthcare professionals if appropriate training has been given. Please consult Waitematā DHB Dietitians if you have questions about using this information

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