

UNDERSTANDING NUTRITION LABELS

People look at the nutrition labels on food for many different reasons. Having a better understanding of what all the information means will help you to identify healthier options.

PRODUCT A		
	Per 30g serve	Per 100g
Energy	467kJ 112 cals	1555kJ 372 cals
Protein	2.6g	8.6g
Fat	0.3g	1.1g
Carbohydrate		
- total	24.1g	80.5g
- sugar	4.1g	13.7g
Dietary Fibre	2.8g	9.4g
Sodium	2mg	8mg
Potassium	127mg	424mg
Ingredients: Whole wheat, fruit paste (25%), (dried dates, sultanas, pear juice concentrate, glycerol), sugar, vitamins (niacin, riboflavin, thiamine).		

Look at the serve size to have an idea of how much you are having in your portion

Use the 100g column to compare products

This is the total of both starch and sugar, and includes natural sugars

Look for no more than 120mg/100g or 0.3% of 100g

Look for the product with more fibre per 100g

Look for products with much more total carbohydrate than from sugar alone

Ingredients are listed from most to least in quantity

What is Sugar?

Sugar occurs naturally in some foods, like fruit and dairy products, and is often added to others during processing. Essentially, sugar is a carbohydrate, and as such, a source of energy.

There are lots of different types of sugar – the most common being white, brown, raw and caster sugar as well as honey and corn syrup. Other terms for sugars include fructose, glucose, sucrose, lactose and maltose.

How much should I eat?

Eating a bit of refined sugar is fine as a simple source of energy but if it's eaten instead of more nutritious foods, it's just empty kilojoules.

Too many sugary foods and drinks can cause tooth decay and the extra kilojoules may stop you from controlling your weight.

Healthy adults should get no more than 10-15% of their daily energy intake from sugars.

What foods should I limit?

- Chocolate
- Potato chips
- Cakes
- Processed foods
- Soft drinks
- Biscuits
- Ice cream
- Processed foods
- Lollies

What is Salt?

Salt is important in maintaining water balance and blood pressure in our bodies as well as being essential for muscle and nerve activity.

Salt (or sodium chloride) contains two minerals – sodium and chlorine – but it's the sodium we need to watch out for. That's why salt is shown as levels of 'sodium' on food labels.

How much should I eat?

Most of the salt we eat comes from processed foods. In fact, many Australians eat far more than they need because it's already in the processed foods we buy.

Eating too much salt can raise blood pressure which in turn increases the risk of stroke and heart disease.

Australian adults should **eat no more than 6g of salt (2300mg of sodium) each day**. That's about one level teaspoon of salt per day.

Low-Salt foods = food with less than 120 mg of sodium per 100g

What foods should I limit?

- Salty snacks, like chips and nuts
- Ready-prepared meals
- Bacon
- Cheese
- Smoked fish
- Pizza
- MSG (monosodium glutamate)
- Sodium bicarbonate
- Sauces, e.g. soy sauce
- Pickles
- Canned soups
- Baked beans

What is Fat?

Fat is important to keep you warm, protect your organs and help absorb and move nutrients around your body.

There are four key types of dietary fat which can be split into those that increase blood cholesterol and those that actually lower it.

GOOD FATS	BAD FATS
<p>Unsaturated Fats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help to lower blood cholesterol levels. • Two types: polyunsaturated and monounsaturated. • Polyunsaturated fats are better at reducing cholesterol and are better known as Omega-3 and Omega-6 fats. • e.g. canola spread, avocado, peanuts. <p>Omega-6 and Omega-3 Fats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • found in both plant and seafood. • reduce the risk of heart disease and lower blood cholesterol levels. • e.g. salmon, sardines, safflower, soy oils. 	<p>Saturated Fats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • raise blood cholesterol levels. <p>Animal-based sources of saturated fat include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dairy foods – such as butter, cream, ghee, regular-fat milk and cheese • Meat – such as fatty cuts of beef, pork and lamb, processed meats like salami, sausages and the skin on chicken, Lard. <p>Plant-derived sources of saturated fat include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palm oil • Cooking margarine and copha • Coconut oil, milk and cream. <p>Saturated fats are also commonly found in many manufactured and packaged foods such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatty snack foods • Deep fried take away foods. • Cakes • Biscuits • Pastries and pies <p>Trans Fatty Acids</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formed when liquid oil is turned into solid fat through a process called hydrogenation. • can be found in very small amounts in milk, cheese, beef and lamb. • behave like saturated fats in the body and raise blood cholesterol levels • e.g. hydrogenated vegetable oil.



Saturated fats are often called 'bad fats' – they are not considered essential for good health and have been linked with an increased risk of high blood cholesterol levels in the body which in turn is a risk factor for heart disease.

Saturated fat is a type of fat that is solid at room temperature. It is mainly found in animal products but can be found in some plant sources.

How much should I eat?

Everyone needs some fat in their diet but we need to be careful in choosing the types of fat we eat.

Eating too much saturated and trans fats has been linked to heart disease so try to eat more unsaturated fats instead.

A moderate fat intake for healthy adults is approximate 30% of their total daily energy consumption. If you're trying to lose weight then it should be 20-25%.

Be careful of your portion sizes – fat has more than twice as many kilojoules, by weight, as carbohydrate and protein.

What foods should I limit?

- Fatty cuts of meat
- full fat milk and cream
- Butter and cheese
- coconut and palm oil
- Biscuits and pastries
- deep fried foods and takeaways

What foods contain the good unsaturated fats?

- Avocado, Nuts (e.g. walnuts, brazil nuts), Seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, sesame, chia seeds, Flaxseed/linseed oil)
- Flaxseed oil, Olive, canola, sunflower, corn, safflower, soy and peanut oils

Other names for Fat, Sugar and Salt on labels

See the table below that lists the many different names for fat, sugar and salt.

FAT	SUGAR	SALT
Beef fat*	Brown sugar	Baking powder
Coconut*	Corn syrup	Booster
Coconut oil*	Dextrose	Celery salt
Copha*	Disaccharides	Garlic salt
Cream*	Fructose	Meat/yeast extract
Dripping*	Glucose	Onion salt
Lard*	Golden syrup	Meat/yeast extract
Mayonnaise*	Honey	Onion salt
Sour cream*	Lactose	Monosodium glutamate
Nuts	Malt	MSG
Oil**	Maltose	Rock salt
Oven fried/baked	Mannitol	Sea salt
Palm oil*	Maple syrup	Sodium
Toasted*	Molasses	Sodium bicarbonate
	Monosaccharides	Sodium metabisulphite
* high in saturated fat	Raw sugar	Sodium nitrate/nitrite
** may be high in saturated fat if it's coconut +/- or palm oil or hydrogenated vegetable oil	Sorbitol	Stock cubes
	Sucrose	
	Xylitol	

Nutrient claims – What do they really mean?

NAME	MEANING
No Added Sugar	No simple sugars have been added. However, the product may contain natural sugars, such as fructose found in fruit, or lactose found in milk.
Sugar Free	Must contain no more than 0.2g total sugar per 100g of solid food. May also contain artificial sweetened.
Lite/Light	This may describe the taste or texture as well as refer to being lower in fat or salt. Read the label carefully for details on fat, salt and sugar.
All Natural	Sugar, oil, fat and cream are all natural but not good for our health – read labels carefully to see what and how much the product really contains.
Low Salt	Must contain less than 120mg of sodium per 100g food – this is a good choice if you wish to reduce salt. “No-salt” or “salt free” are even better.
Low Joule/Diet	Artificially sweetened instead of using sugar. Best to limit these amounts especially in children.
National Health Foundation (NHF) Tick	Foods with the NHF tick are healthy choices amongst foods of similar type. They meet NHF guidelines for total fat, saturated (animal) fat, salt, sugar and where appropriate, fibre. NHF has set guidelines for 10 different food categories. The tick is even on products high in fat like margarine and oils which are low in saturated fat and higher in poly or monounsaturated fats. Have these fats in small amounts. Not all companies make use of the tick even though their products may qualify. Read labels as well and not just look for NHF tick.
Salt reduced	Contains less salt than the usual product. But caution; they may still be high in salt.
Cholesterol Free/ Low Cholesterol	Does not mean low in fat – read labels carefully for fat content.
Toasted/Oven Baked	Generally means the product has been cooked in oil or fat – watch the fat content in these products.
Carbohydrate Modified	Alternatives to normal sugar are used, which have the same calories as sugar containing products. They are also usually as high in fat as original product. Not recommended for regular use.
Low Fat	Products labelled low fat are a better choice than full fat products. These should be less than 3g fat per 100g weight of drinks & 10g fat per 100g of food.
Reduced Fat	Not necessarily low fat, but the product is lower in fat compared to usual – look for the product with the least fat.