

reading food labels

Eating well involves choosing a variety of foods which are low in saturated fat and salt, plus foods which are high in fibre such as wholegrain bread and cereals, legumes, fruits and vegetables. There are many foods which fit this description, but finding them on the supermarket shelves can often be difficult. However, there is a way.

Learn how to read food labels!

The labels on all packaged foods must contain the following information. By reading these labels, you will be able to judge where the food fits into your eating pattern:

- Name of the food.
- Name and business address of the manufacturer or importer.
- Name of the country the food came from.
- A list of ingredients in order of weight from greatest to smallest amount (including added water).
- The percentage of the key or 'characterising' ingredient of the food.
- Warnings about the presence of major allergens, no matter how small the amount.
- Nutrition Information Panel.
- A 'use-by' date (ie: if a food must be consumed before a certain date for health and safety reasons) or 'best before' date (ie: if the shelf life is less than two years).

The Ingredient List

All packaged foods must have an ingredient list on their labels. All ingredients are listed in descending order by weight (ie: from the greatest to the smallest amount), so you can work out roughly how much of the ingredient the food contains. You can use this information to help you decide whether or not you want to buy the food.

All food manufacturers must include certain details on labels, such as ingredients and food additives, 'use-by' date, name of manufacturer and the country in which it was made. Look for the Ingredient List and the Nutrition Information Panel to help you to make healthy choices.



NUTRITION INFORMATION		
SERVINGS PER PACKAGE		
SERVING SIZE: 150G		
	Qty per Serving	Qty
Energy	608 kJ	4/
Protein	4.2g	
Fat, total	7.4g	
Saturated	4.5g	

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Percentage labelling

Some packaged foods show the percentage of the key ingredients or components in the food product. For example in strawberry yoghurt, strawberries are a key ingredient, so the percentage of strawberries is indicated. In some cases, such as plain milk or bread, there are no key or 'characterising' ingredients.

The Nutrition Information panel

Most packaged foods must have a Nutrition Information panel, regardless of whether any nutrition claims (eg: 'reduced fat' or 'low salt') are made. Exceptions include small packages and foods like herbs and spices, tea, coffee as well as foods sold unpackaged or made and packaged at the point of sale.

Nutrition Information panels provide information on:

- Energy (kilojoules/calories)
- Protein
- Total fat and saturated fat
- Total carbohydrate and sugars (including 'added sugar' and sugar that is present naturally)
- Sodium

The Nutrition Information panel provides very useful information that can be used to decide whether a food is suitable for someone with diabetes.

See page 3 for a sample Nutrition Information panel plus an explanation about how it can help you to make better choices.

Serving size	NUTRITION INFORMATION		Per 100g
<p>This is the average serving size of the product as determined by the manufacturer. However, this may not be the same as the serving you have.</p>	<p>SERVINGS PER PACKAGE: 3 SERVING SIZE: 150G</p>		<p>100g is a useful standard to compare products eg: which is lower in fat. Use this information when choosing products.</p>
		Qty per Serving	Qty per 100g
	Energy	608 kJ	405kJ
	Protein	4.2g	2.8g
	Fat, total – saturated	7.4g 4.5g	4.9g 3.0g
	Carbohydrate – total – sugars	18.6g 18.6g	12.4g 12.4g
	Sodium	90mg	60mg
Fat	Carbohydrate	Sodium (salt)	
<p>Total This is the total amount of fat in the product. It includes the amount of fat from the three main types of fat: saturated, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated.</p> <p>Saturated Use the figure per 100g, compare similar products and pick the one with less saturated fat.</p>	<p>Total This includes both sugars and starches in food. If you are counting carbohydrates you can use this figure to work out how much carbohydrate is in the food.</p> <p>Sugars This tells you how much of the total carbohydrate is sugar. This includes ‘added sugar’ as well as naturally occurring sugars like lactose (milk sugar) and fructose (fruit sugar). Sugar content alone will not predict the effect of the food on your blood glucose level.</p>	<p>Choose, where possible, products with reduced or no added salt.</p>	

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How to find healthy low GI foods when shopping

Most of us make up our mind about which foods we are going to buy when we're in the supermarket. As most foods have a Nutrition Information panel, it is easy to check the kilojoule, total carbohydrate, saturated fat or sodium content of a food. But it is not mandatory for food companies to put the GI on the labels of foods.

Keep an eye out for the GI Tested Symbol

To help people identify healthy low GI foods while shopping, the University of Sydney, Diabetes Australia and the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation joined forces to develop the easily identifiable GI Symbol. The Symbol indicates that a food has had its GI measured using the Australian Standard to ensure its accuracy, and that it meets strict nutrient criteria, consistent with Australia's Dietary Guidelines ie: they must contain at least 10 grams of carbohydrate per serve, be low in saturated fat, moderate in sodium and where appropriate a source of dietary fibre.



The GI Symbol was officially launched to Australian consumers in July 2002 and a broad selection of foods and beverages with the Symbol are available in your local supermarket.

Would you like to join Australia's leading diabetes organisation?

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For more information phone **1300 136 588** or visit your State/Territory Organisation's website:

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NT	www.healthylivingnt.org.au	QLD	www.diabetesqld.org.au
SA	www.diabetessa.com.au	TAS	www.diabetestas.com.au
VIC	www.diabetesvic.org.au	WA	www.diabeteswa.com.au

The design, content and production of this diabetes information sheet has been undertaken by the eight State and Territory member organisations of Diabetes Australia Ltd listed below:

- > Diabetes Australia – NSW
- > Diabetes Australia – Queensland
- > Diabetes ACT
- > Diabetes SA
- > Diabetes Australia – Victoria
- > Diabetes Australia – Tasmania
- > Diabetes WA
- > Healthy Living NT

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