

# LEAPS

learning eating active play sleep

## Food labels

Nutritional information on food labels is there to help us make informed, healthy food choices, to assist in better overall health and wellbeing.

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### Food labels may include information that:

- Tells us which nutrients, in what amounts, are in the product
- Tells us if the product is out of date or its use-by date/best before date
- Explains storage, preparation or cooking methods the product requires
- Lists ingredients, and if there are any allergens present
- States the country in which the product was made or produced and the company marketing it
- Provides the product weight
- Provides the suggested serving size



**'Best before'** – Foods with a shelf date of less than two years have a 'best before' date. They are still safe to consume after this date, but may have lost some quality and nutritional value. Food with a best before date can be legally sold after that date provided the food is fit for human consumption.

**'Use by'** – Foods marked with a 'use by' date must be eaten before a certain time for health and safety reasons. They should not be eaten after this date and cannot be legally sold after this date too.

### Ingredients list

This lists all ingredients in a product in descending order, by weight. The first ingredient is present in the largest amount and the last ingredient is present in the least amount.

### Did you know when the following terms are listed they can mean a range of any of the following:

- **Contain sugar:** brown sugar, corn syrup, dextrose, disaccharides, fructose, glucose, golden syrup, honey, lactose, malt, maltose, mannitol, maple syrup, molasses, monosaccharides, sorbitol, sucrose, xylitol.
- **Contain salt (sodium):** baking powder, celery salt, garlic salt, sodium, meat or yeast extract, onion salt, monosodium glutamate (msg), rock salt, sea salt, sodium bicarbonate, sodium metabisulphite, sodium nitrate/nitrite and stock cubes.
- **Contain fat:** lard, butter, suet, dripping, shortening, vegetable oil, margarine, cocoa butter, animal fat, coconut oil, cream, copha, palm oil, chocolate.

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Guide to terms used on food labels:



For a manufacturer to make claims, their products must meet various guidelines including:

- **No added sugar** – products must not contain added sugar but may contain natural sugars.
- **Reduced fat or salt** – should be at least a 25% reduction from the original product or at least 3g or less fat per 100g. This doesn't always mean they are low in fat!
- **Low salt foods** – 120mg of sodium or less per 100g
- **Low fat** – must contain less than 3% fat for solid foods (1.5% for liquid foods).
- **Fat free** – must be less than 0.15% fat.
- **Percentage of fat** – remember 80% fat free is the same as 20% fat, which is a large amount.
- **Good source of** – must contain at least 25% of the RDI for that vitamin or mineral.

If a product has a picture of a food on the label, it must contain that food e.g. raspberries. If it contained raspberry flavouring rather than real raspberries, it must be labelled as 'raspberry-flavoured'.

Don't be misled by labelling tricks... Here's some fast facts to help you:

- 'Light' or 'lite' doesn't necessarily mean the product is low in fat or energy. It may be a term referring to the texture, colour or taste.
- 'No cholesterol', 'low cholesterol' or 'cholesterol free' on products derived from plants (e.g. margarine and oil) are meaningless as all plant foods contain virtually no cholesterol. However some products may have a high (saturated) fat content.
- No added salt or reduced salt means no salt has been added or the normal quantity has been reduced.
- 'Baked not fried' may still have added fat – check the nutritional information.
- 'Fresh' means the product hasn't been frozen, canned or treated at high temperatures or with chemicals. However these foods may be been refrigerated and spent time in transportation.
- Check the servings per pack – how much equates to a serve? You may be serving too large a portion?
- Always check the 'best before' and 'use by' dates on products you purchase – especially those on 'special'. Keep an eye on food in your cupboards too.

For more information see: <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/how-understand-food-labels>

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### Nutrition information panel

This information helps compare the nutrients of similar products and choose the one that is suitable. The nutrition information panel tells you the quantity of various nutrients of food contains per serve, as well as per 100g or 100ml.

It's best to use the 'per 100g or 100ml' to compare similar products as the size of one 'serving' may differ between manufacturers.

Nutrients that must be listed on the nutrition information panel include:

- Energy (in kilojoules)
- Protein
- Total fat
- Saturated fat
- Total carbohydrates
- Sugars
- Sodium

Other nutrients such as fibre, potassium, calcium, iron and cholesterol may be listed if a claim is made on the label.

Example of a nutrition information panel:

Nutrition Information – Muesli Bar		
Servings per package: 6		
Serving size: 31.3g (per bar)		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy	570kJ	1810kJ
Protein	2.1g	6.7g
Fat		
Total	4.8g	15.4g
Saturated	2.6g	8.4g
Carbohydrates		
Total	20.5g	65.6g
Sugars	9.6g	30.8g
Fibre	1.6g	5.2g
Sodium	30mg	100mg
Ingredients: Wholegrain cereals (32%) [rolled <b>oats</b> (24%), whole <b>wheat</b> (8%)], <b>yoghurt</b> compound [sugar, vegetable fat, skim <b>yoghurt</b> powder (4%), <b>whey</b> powder, emulsifiers ( <b>soy</b> lecithin, 492), food acid (citric)], glucose ( <b>wheat</b> ), sugar, <b>wheat</b> puffs (wholemeal <b>wheat</b> flour (3%), <b>wheat</b> starch, sugar, antioxidant [307b]), dried apple ( <b>sulphites</b> ), sunflower oil ( <b>soy</b> ), humectant (sorbitol), coconut ( <b>sulphites</b> ), berry juice concentrates (strawberry (0.6%), elderberry), honey, skim <b>milk</b> powder, emulsifier ( <b>soy</b> lecithin), food acid (citric), flavour, preservative ( <b>sulphur dioxide</b> )+		

Where possible, choose products that are:

- Less than **10g fat per 100g**
- Less than **3g saturated fat per 100**
- Less than **15g sugar per 100g**
- Less than **400mg sodium per 100g** (ideally less than 120mg sodium per 100g)
- **More than 3g fibre per serve**
- *Stay away from products with fat, sugar or salt in the top 3 of its ingredient list*

For more information, see [www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/how-understand-food-labels](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/how-understand-food-labels).