

Label reading guide.

Food labels can be confusing and difficult to understand, making it hard to choose healthy packaged foods. The healthy shopper's guide can assist you to choose healthier packaged products from the supermarket by taking the guess work out of knowing what nutrition information to look for.

Follow these steps using the traffic light system to make healthier food and drink choices:

1. Choose the product and find the nutrition information panel on the back or side of the pack.
2. Look for the 'per 100g' column.
3. Compare the amount of total fat, saturated fat, sugars and sodium with the amounts in this guide to get a traffic light rating.



	 Healthiest eat most often	 OK eat sometimes	 Least healthy cut down
per 100g			
Total fat	3g or less	3.1g–19.9g	20g or more
Saturated fat	1.5g or less	1.6g–4.9g	5g or more
Sugars	5g or less	5.1g–14.9g	15g or more
Sodium	120mg or less	121mg–599mg	600mg or more

Look for foods with 4g or more of fibre per serve. Includes milk drinks.

Comparing food labels

By comparing the fat, sugar, sodium (salt) and fibre content of products, you can choose the healthiest product for you and your family.

When comparing food products, it's best to use the 'per 100g' or 'per 100mL' column, as not all 'per serve' sizes are the same. By using the 100g/100mL column, you know you are always comparing the same quantity.

Total fat

Total fat refers to the total amount of saturated fat (bad fat) and unsaturated fat (good fat) in the product. Unsaturated fats can help lower cholesterol and can be found in olive and canola oils, nut oils, avocado oil and deep sea fish oils such as sardines and salmon. These fats can be part of a healthy diet, however, all fats are energy dense and can contribute to weight gain when consumed in excess. Check the total fat amount before deciding whether or not to eat a product, particularly if you are trying to lose weight.

Saturated fat

Saturated fats are often called 'bad fats.' Eating saturated fat is linked with high blood cholesterol levels, which is a risk factor for heart disease. Saturated fat is mainly found in animal products such as fatty cuts of beef, pork and lamb, processed meats, butter and full cream dairy, but is also found in plant-based products such as coconut milk, coconut oil and palm oil, as well as processed foods like cakes, biscuits, chocolate, chips and fried foods. Aim to limit foods high in saturated fat.

Sugars

Sugars mean both added sugars and naturally occurring sugars such as fruit sugar (fructose) and milk sugar (lactose). Sugars are often added to many processed foods including cereals, spreads, sauces, drinks, biscuits, cakes, chocolate and lollies.

Sodium

Sodium is another name for salt. Salt is a leading cause of high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. Low salt foods are those with less than 120mg per 100g.

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