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At a glance:



Food labels often contain lots of nutrition information. This guide helps you to make sense of food labels so you can make healthier choices.

By eating well and being a healthy weight, you can reduce your risk of cancer and other diseases.



Types of nutrition information on packaging:

- **Nutrition tables** – found on most packaged foods and drinks, usually printed on the back.
- **Ingredients** – listed in order of amount (by weight), from highest to lowest.
- **Front-of-pack labels** – simplified nutrition information found on the front of packaging. These are voluntary, but the Government is trying to get food manufacturers to use the same design as much as possible.

How to use front-of-pack labels

Looking at front-of-pack labels is the easiest way to see whether a food is a healthier choice. You can use them to compare products at a glance.

The labels usually include traffic light colours which show you if the product is **high**, **medium** or **low** in fat, sugar and salt.

Traffic lights explained:



Red - Eat occasionally

The more reds on a front-of-pack label, the less healthy the food is likely to be.

Try to eat these foods less frequently or only in small amounts.



Amber - Eat sometimes

Amber means a food is neither especially high nor low in a nutrient (fat, sugar or salt) so you can eat foods with all, or mostly, ambers quite often.



Green - Eat regularly

If a food has all or mostly greens, it's likely to be a healthier choice and you can eat it more often or in larger amounts.

Here is an example of a front-of-pack label and how to read it:

1 Nutrients – fat, saturates, sugars and salt

Nutrition labels show the amount of each nutrient in a portion, in grams. The amounts will also be colour-coded with traffic light labels, so that you can easily see if that amount is **high** (red), **medium** (amber) or **low** (green).

2 What's a 'serving'?

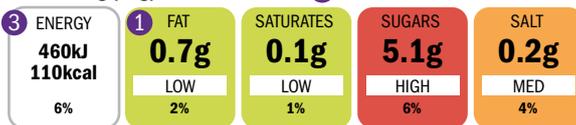
Food labels usually have a recommended 'serving' or portion size. It's important to check the portion size – even similar types of food use different sized portions.

This example shows the information for a 30g serving of breakfast cereal, even though many of us would eat more than this.

At a glance: making sense of food and drink labelling

Front-of-pack nutrition label (example)

Each serving (30g) of cereal contains 2



4 % of adult's reference intake.
Typical values per 100g: Energy 1530kJ/360kcal

Always remember to check the serving size these values are for.
They may not be for the amount you usually eat or drink.

3 Energy

Energy is measured in kilojoules (kJ) and kilocalories (kcal – often called calories). Traffic light labels show the amount in 100g (100ml for drinks) and often the amount in a portion too. Remember to check the portion size on the label so that you don't under or overestimate the calories you need.

On average, women need about 2,000 calories a day and men need about 2,500 calories a day. Children and older adults tend to need less, but teenagers and very active people may need more.

4 Reference intake

The 'reference intake' shows the percentage of energy, fat, sugar and salt in a portion, out of the healthy maximum amount suitable per day. How much you can have depends on your size and lifestyle. Remember that the recommended maximum amount is an upper limit for most people, not a target to aim for.

No colour coding?

If the label doesn't include traffic light colours, you can check the amount of each nutrient in 100g, then use the back of the removable card to translate the information into red, amber or green.

Understanding food label claims

What does 'no added sugar' mean?

'No added sugar' means that manufacturers haven't added any sugar to the food or drink. But this doesn't mean that there is no sugar. For example, fruit contains natural sugars, meaning that dried fruit and fruit juices may have amber or even red labels for sugar.

You can check if sugar has been added by reading the ingredients list. As well as 'sugar', look out for syrup, honey and words ending in '-ose' (for example, sucrose, glucose and fructose) as these can be other words for sugar. Ingredients are listed in weight order, so if any of these appear near the top of the list, the product is likely to be very sugary.

Remember, both added and naturally-occurring sugars are calorific and can damage your teeth so try to limit how much you have.

What does 'reduced-fat' or 'low-fat' mean?

Reduced fat means that the product has at least 30 per cent less fat than the original version of the product. However, if the original product is high in fat, the reduced-fat version might still be high in fat.

Low fat means that the product contains no more than 3g of fat per 100g of food.

Reduced-fat or low-fat products can also still be high in calories. Sometimes the fat is replaced with sugar, so read the label to compare the calories, sugar and fat in the original and the lower-fat product.



For more information about this leaflet please contact us:

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Label reader: for food

Cut out both boxes separately and stick together, back-to-back, to create a handy reference card you can keep in your wallet. If the label doesn't include traffic light colours, use the table to see how healthy a food is.

At a glance: making sense of food and drink labelling

Front-of-pack nutrition label (example)

Each serving (30g) of cereal contains

ENERGY 460kJ 110kcal 6%	FAT 0.7g LOW 2%	SATURATES 0.1g LOW 1%	SUGARS 5.1g HIGH 6%	SALT 0.2g MED 4%
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% of adult's reference intake.
Typical values per 100g: Energy 1530kJ/360kcal

Always remember to check the serving size these values are for.
They may not be for the amount you usually eat or drink.



Food labelling: colour-coding explained

Amount of each nutrient in 100g of food

	High	Medium	Low
(TOTAL) SUGARS	over 22.5g (over 27g/portion*)	over 5g to 22.5g	5g and below
FAT	over 17.5g (over 21g/portion*)	over 3g to 17.5g	3g and below
SATURATES	over 5g (over 6g/portion*)	over 1.5g to 5g	1.5g and below
SALT	over 1.5g (over 1.8g/portion*)	over 0.3g to 1.5g	0.3g and below

*Used when suggested portion size is greater than 100g

Please note: this card contains more in-depth information compared to the printed version of this leaflet.

Label reader: for drinks

Cut out both boxes separately and stick together, back-to-back, to create a handy reference card you can keep in your wallet. If the label doesn't include traffic light colours, use the table to see how healthy a drink is.

At a glance: making sense of food and drink labelling

Front-of-pack nutrition label (example)

Each 250ml serving contains

ENERGY 450kJ 105kcal 5%	FAT 0.0g LOW 0%	SATURATES 0.0g LOW 0%	SUGARS 26.5g HIGH 29%	SALT 0.0g LOW 0%
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% of adult's reference intake.
Typical values per 100ml: Energy 180kJ/42kcal

Always remember to check the serving size these values are for.
They may not be for the amount you usually drink.



Drink labelling: colour-coding explained

Amount of each nutrient in 100g or ml of drink

	High	Medium	Low
(TOTAL) SUGARS	over 11.25g (over 13.5g/portion*)	over 2.5g to 11.25g	2.5g and below
FAT	over 8.75g (over 10.5g/portion*)	over 1.5g to 8.75g	1.5g and below
SATURATES	over 2.5g (over 3g/portion*)	over 0.75g to 2.5g	0.75g and below
SALT	over 0.75g (over 0.9g/portion*)	over 0.3g to 0.75g	0.3g and below

*Used when suggested portion size is greater than 150ml

Remember, the measurement of grams (g) and millilitres (ml) are the same.

Please note: this card is not currently included in the printed version of this leaflet.