

READING FOOD LABELS



WHAT CAN A FOOD LABEL TELL US?

Food labels can be confusing, but they do contain useful information such as:

- nutrition information panel
- ingredients list
- 'use by' or 'best before' date
- storage information
- weight of the food
- food allergy information (e.g. nuts)

CHECKING THE INGREDIENTS LIST

- Ingredients are always listed in order, from the biggest to smallest amount. This means that if fat or sugar are listed first or second in the ingredients list, the food or drink is high in fat or sugar.
- There are many different names for the fat and sugar added to food that you should look out for on the ingredients list:
 - fat may also be listed as oil, shortening, cocoa butter or cream
 - sugar may also be listed as glucose, sucrose, dextrose, lactose, maltose, maltodextrin, molasses, honey, golden syrup, fruit juice concentrate, corn syrup or maple syrup.

CHOCOLATE BISCUITS

Ingredients sugar, wheat flour, vegetable oil, cocoa butter, cocoa mass, golden syrup, colours, salt

Sugar is first on the ingredients list, so these biscuits are very high in sugar. They also contain fat (vegetable oil and cocoa butter) and extra sugar (golden syrup).

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THE NUTRITION INFORMATION PANEL

NUTRITION INFORMATION: CHOCOLATE BISCUITS		
Serves per package: 11 Serve Size: 18.3g	PER SERVE (1 biscuit)	PER 100g
ENERGY	400kJ	2160kJ
PROTEIN	1.0g	5.6g
FAT		
-TOTAL	4.9g	27.0g
-SATURATED	2.4g	13.3g
CARBOHYDRATE		
-TOTAL	11.3g	62.0g
-SUGARS	8.2g	45.0g
DIETARY FIBRE	0g	0g
SODIUM	31mg	170mg

This tells us that these biscuits are too high in fat, saturated fat and sugar.

Using the 'per 100g' column is the best way to compare different products. The food company decides what a 'serve' of their product is. The 'per serve' column may not be the same serving size that you eat.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

- **Energy** This is measured in kilojoules (kJ). Children need enough kJ to grow and develop normally but too much kJ and too little activity can lead to them being overweight.
- **Protein** This is important for growth, and keeping muscles strong.
- **Fat** For children over two years choose dairy products that are labelled 'low' or 'reduced fat'. Look for processed products that are less than 3g per 100g of total fat.
- **Saturated fat** Choose products that are 1.5g per 100g of saturated fat.
- **Carbohydrate** This provides the body and brain with energy.
- **Sugars** Compare and choose foods with the lowest amount of sugar. Check the ingredients list and choose foods that do not have added sugars.
- **Fibre** Helps you feel full for longer and prevent constipation. Look for more than 3g per 100g.
- **Sodium** Choose products labelled 'low' or 'reduced sodium'. Low salt foods are those with less than 120mg per 100g of sodium.