

Food labels can be very confusing and tricky to understand. Often we don't have the time to spend trying to work out what they mean and how to use them. Knowing what nutrition information to look for can help you make the best choice for your health and avoid unnecessary saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and kilojoules. When looking at products, the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) and the ingredients list provides the simplest and easiest way to choose the healthiest items.

Nutrition Information Panel (NIP)

- Displays the nutrients in a standard format, providing amounts per serve and per 100g (or 100ml if liquid) of the food
- Lists the amount of energy (kilojoules), protein, total fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars and sodium (salt), as well as any other nutrient about which a claim is made (e.g., fibre, iron, calcium)

While nutrition content claims can generally guide you to healthier choices, it is important to check the claim by looking at the NIP

Ingredients list

- Use this to check the first three ingredients for items high in saturated fat, sodium (salt) or added sugar

For example, a label that states: flour, potato, salt, flavouring; has more flour than any other ingredient but is still high in salt

How much is too much?

The energy, fat and sodium requirements vary depending on age and activity level. Visit [Eat for Health](#) website to calculate your requirements.

BREAKING IT DOWN

Example:

Baked savoury goods

Servings per package: 6
Average serving size: 16 biscuits (35g)

	Per serve 16 biscuits (35g)	Per 100g
Energy (KJ)	770kJ	2195kJ
Protein	5.2g	14.8g
Total fat	8.8g	25.1g
Saturated fat	3.9g	11.1g
Carbohydrate	20.4g	58.1g
Sugars	1.1g	3.2g
Dietary fibre	1.4g	4.0g
Sodium	238mg	678mg

Ingredients: Are usually listed in order from highest to lowest amounts

Serves

- This is the number of serves in the packet. i.e. this product has 6 serves of 16 biscuits
- This is the serve size determined by the manufacturer - this can often be different than what is recommended

Per serve

- This column gives the nutritional information of the product at its serve size
- **If calculating how much of a nutrient, or how many kilojoules you will actually eat, use the per serve column**

Per 100g

- This column gives the nutritional information of the product per 100g
- This is a standard measure and can be found on all products with a NIP
- **Use this column to compare nutrients in similar food products**
- *This column can also be converted into a percentage - Did you know this product contains 25% fat?*

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE LOOKING OUT FOR?

Energy

This is the total amount of kilojoules in the food. Carbohydrates, protein, fat, alcohol and dietary fibre all contribute to the energy content of foods and drinks

Protein

Sources of quality protein include; meat, poultry, fish, eggs, milk and cheese, lentils, beans, nuts

Total Fat

It is recommended to choose products that have between **3-10g/ 100g serve**

This is the total fat in the product and includes saturated fat, trans fat and poly & mono unsaturated fats

Saturated Fat

Consuming large amounts of saturated fats can have a negative impact on our health. Choose products with **less than 3g/100g**

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Carbohydrates & Sugars

Carbohydrate includes all types such as starches and sugars. Sugars include both naturally occurring and added sugars. Products which have naturally occurring sugars include dairy products like milk. It is recommended to choose products with less than 15/100g

Dietary Fibre

Dietary fibre is important for keeping our gut and bowels healthy. When choosing cereals and/or bread products it is recommended to choose products with 3g /per serve

Sodium

Packaged foods can often be high in sodium. When choosing a packaged product it is recommended to choose food items with sodium content less than **400mg/100g**

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What to look for? Fat, sugar and salt can masquerade under many different names

Fat

butter, oil or monoglycerides animal fat/oil, beef fat, butter, chocolate, milk solids, coconut, coconut oil/milk/cream, copha, cream, ghee, dripping, lard, suet, palm oil, sour cream, vegetable shortening

Sugar

dextrose, fructose, glucose, golden syrup, honey, maple syrup, sucrose, malt, maltose, lactose, brown sugar, caster sugar, maple syrup, raw sugar, sucrose

Salt

baking powder, celery salt, garlic salt, meat/yeast extract, monosodium glutamate, (MSG), onion salt, rock salt, sea salt, sodium, sodium ascorbate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium nitrate/nitrite, stock cubes, vegetable salt

HOW TO CALCULATE THE NUTRIENTS IN A SERVE

Step 1

Look at the 'per serve' column for the following nutrients:

- Energy (kilojoules)
- Total fat
- Saturated Fat
- Sugar
- Sodium

Step 3

Calculate the nutrient amounts in your serving size:

- Energy: $770\text{kJ} \times 1.5 \text{ serves} = 1155\text{kJ}$
- Total fat: $8.8\text{g} \times 1.5 = 13.2\text{g}$
- Saturated fat: $3.9\text{g} \times 1.5 = 5.9\text{g}$
- Sugar: $1.1\text{g} \times 1.5 = 5.9\text{g}$
- Sodium: $238\text{mg} \times 1.5 = 357\text{mg}$

Step 2

Determine your serve size:

- You may be consuming 24 biscuits as a serve
- This is one and a half times the serve on the label, i.e $16 \times 1.5 = 24$ biscuits

Sources: National Health and Medical Research Council Eat for Health; The Federation of Canteens in Schools (FOCIS), 1997; Livelihood, Food label reading card.