

# Be Weight Wise: Read your labels



TO HELP YOU CHOOSE A HEALTHIER DIET, check out the food labels on foods and drinks. The things people often eat too much of are calories (energy) from fat and sugary foods. Although you don't have to avoid them completely you do need to watch out as they're often present without us even realising. So, to make it easier for you to eat a well-balanced diet and work out the fat and sugar content of different foods, **check out the food label.**

The nutrition panel on the label of most foods and drinks can provide very useful information – if you understand what the figures mean.

Amounts are given 'per 100g' of food and may also be given 'per serving' of the product so you can work out how much energy (calories), fat and sugar you will be getting.

## What does the nutrition information mean?

**ENERGY** kJ (kilojoules)/kcal (kilocalories)

People who are watching their weight may find it useful to look at the calorie value. Kilocalories are the same as calories.

**CARBOHYDRATE** includes both sugar and starches. The figure given for sugars includes both added sugar and natural sugar (e.g. fruit sugar).

**FAT** There are 3 main types of fat – saturates, polyunsaturates and monounsaturates. The label shows the total amount of fat and may provide information on the different types.

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
TYPICAL VALUES (Cooked as per instructions)		
	per SERVING	per 100g
<b>ENERGY</b>	1462 k J. 351 k cal	975 k J. 234 k cal
<b>PROTEIN</b>	9.0g	6.0g
<b>CARBOHYDRATE</b>	28.2g	18.8g
of which <b>sugars</b>	3.0g	2.0g
of which starch	25.2g	16.8g
<b>FATS</b>	<b>23.3g</b>	<b>14.9g</b>
of which saturates	7.6g	5.1g
of which mono-unsaturates	10.9g	7.3g
of which polyunsaturates	2.7g	1.8g
<b>FIBRE</b>	<b>1.6g</b>	<b>1.1g</b>
<b>SODIUM</b>	<b>0.6g</b>	<b>0.4g</b>
<b>PER SERVING</b>	<b>351 CAL</b>	<b>23.3g FAT</b>
GUIDELINE DAILY AMOUNTS		
EACH DAY	WOMEN	MEN
CALORIES	2000	2500
FAT	70g	95g
OFFICIAL UK GOVERNMENT FIGURES FOR AVERAGE ADULTS		



**Guideline Daily Amounts (GDAs)** are provided on many food labels as a guide to the amount of calories and fat adults should be eating each day. This allows you see how much is in a serving of the product, and compare this to a total daily diet - this helps you decide whether the product fits into your diet. Some labels now also carry GDAs for salt

# Nutrition claims – what do they mean?

Terms such as 'low', 'reduced', and 'less than' are widely used on food labels – but what do they really mean?



## Fat

It's important to watch the **amount of fat** in your diet – particularly the saturated fat. To help you choose lower-fat options more easily, look for nutrition claims such as 'low fat' or 'reduced fat'. But always check to see exactly **how much** fat the product actually contributes to your guideline daily amount.

**'Low fat'** – contains less than 3g fat per 100g or 100ml of the product.

**'Less than 5% fat'** (or **'95% fat-free'**) – indicates the food contains less than 5g fat per 100g. For example if you bought a ready meal which had this claim, and the serving size was 400g, then the whole meal would contain 20g fat.

**'Reduced fat'** – must contain 25% less fat than a similar standard product. It doesn't mean the product is 'low fat', particularly if the standard product is very high in fat to start with.

**'X% less fat than'** the standard product – shows the fat reduction made to a product compared to a standard named product, e.g. 20% less fat than a comparable product. Again, this type of claim can help you choose lower-fat options, but the fat content could still be high.

So use these claims as a guide only. Always check the nutrition panel for the **total amount of fat** in a serving and compare this with the **Guideline Daily Amount (GDA)**.

And remember, low or reduced fat foods may still contain a lot of **sugar** and **calories!**



## Sugar



Claims about sugar are based on the **total amount of sugar**, including sugars which occur naturally in fruit and milk, plus any added sugar.

**'No added sugar'** – No sugars from any source have been added. May still contain a lot of natural sugar e.g. fruit sugar in fruit juice.

**'Low Sugar'** – contains no more than 5g of sugar per 100g or 100ml of food.

**'Reduced sugar'** – must contain 25% less sugar than the regular product.

## How much is a lot?

**Judging whether a food is a healthy choice or not will depend on how you eat it as well as how many calories (and how much fat and sugar) it contains. As well as using the Guideline Daily Amounts, use this quick guide.**

For a complete main meal or 100g of a snack item (such as biscuits or crisps) use the following rules of thumb:

'A LITTLE'	'A LOT'
...these amounts or less:	...these amounts or more:
2g of sugars	10g of sugars
3g of fat	20g of fat
1g of saturated fat	5g of saturated fat

For example, if a ready meal contains 30g of fat it would contribute **a lot** of fat to your daily intake.

**"One, two, three – feel free!  
Five, ten, twenty – more than plenty!"**

This fact sheet was produced by The British Dietetic Association for Food First 2002. The British Dietetic Association is the professional association for State Registered Dietitians. For more information on The British Dietetic Association and its Food First campaign visit the website [www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)  
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