Reading food labels



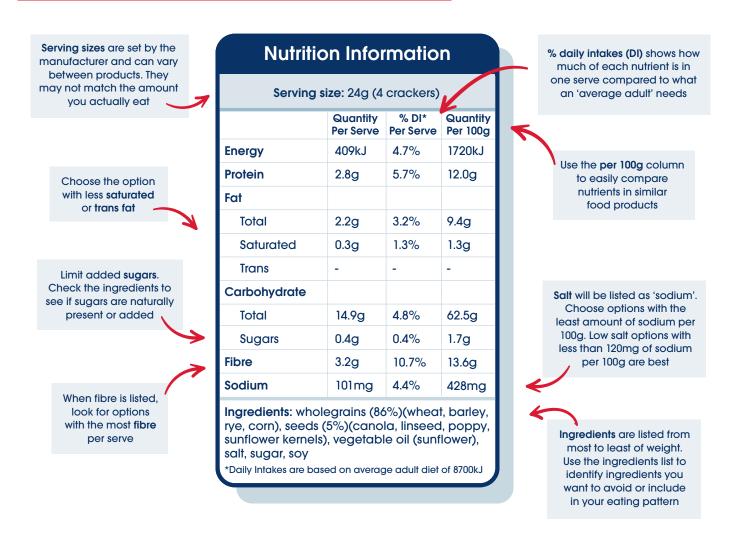
Label reading for heart-health

Almost all packaged foods have a nutrition information panel (NIP) and ingredient list on the packet. This information is helpful to compare similar foods so you can choose the best option for your heart health. For most people looking to make heart-healthy choices, the NIP is most useful to choose lower salt products and avoid products high in saturated and trans fats.

Key things to know

- Use the per 100g/ml column to compare similar products
- For heart-health, choose foods that are low in salt and low in saturated/trans fats
- Always check nutrition claims like "low fat" or "reduced salt" by looking at the nutrition information panel

What's included on a nutrition information panel?



Understanding nutrition claims

Nutrition claims like "low fat" or "reduced salt" can be helpful, but they don't always tell the full story. Here's what they really mean:

Reduced salt	At least 25% less salt than the regular product – but it may still be high. Check the label!
No added salt	No salt has been added, but the product may still naturally contain sodium.
Low fat	Less than 3g of fat per 100g of solid food, or 1.5g per 100ml for liquids.
Reduced fat	At least 25% less fat than the regular version.
Fat-free	Contains less than 0.15g of fat per 100g.
Low cholesterol	No more than 10mg of cholesterol per 100ml for liquids, or 20mg per 100g for solid foods. Cholesterol only comes from animal products.
Lite/Light	Could mean lower in fat or salt – or just lighter in colour or flavour! Check the nutrition panel to be sure.
Source of fibre	Contains at least 2g of fibre per serve. A "good source" has at least 4g per serve, and an "excellent source" has at least 7g per serve.
Contains plant sterols	The nutrition information panel must show how much has been added to the food.

Health star ratings



The Health Star Rating is voluntary, so not all products will have one. Health Star Ratings are a quick way to compare how healthy packaged foods are within their category, for example comparing one brand of muesli bar with another. You'll find them on the front of food packaging. When comparing similar foods, choose the option with the most stars.

We're here to help!

For more healthy eating tips and tools, visit our website!

heartfoundation.org.au

References

National Health and Medical Council. How to understand food labels. 2021. Accessed September 2024. eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/how-understand-food-labels

Food Standards Australia New Zealand. Nutrition content claims and health claims. 2023. Accessed September 2024. foodstandards.gov.au/consumer/labelling/nutrition

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