

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?

Serving sizes are set by the manufacturer and can vary between products. They may not match the amount you actually eat

Choose the option with less **saturated** or **trans fat**

Limit **added sugars**. Check the ingredients to see if sugars are naturally present or added

When **fibre** is listed, look for options with the most **fibre** per serve

Nutrition Information

Serving size: 24g (4 crackers)

	Quantity Per Serve	% DI* Per Serve	Quantity Per 100g
Energy	409kJ	4.7%	1720kJ
Protein	2.8g	5.7%	12.0g
Fat			
Total	2.2g	3.2%	9.4g
Saturated	0.3g	1.3%	1.3g
Trans	-	-	-
Carbohydrate			
Total	14.9g	4.8%	62.5g
Sugars	0.4g	0.4%	1.7g
Fibre	3.2g	10.7%	13.6g
Sodium	101mg	4.4%	428mg

Ingredients: wholegrains (86%)(wheat, barley, rye, corn), seeds (5%)(canola, linseed, poppy, sunflower kernels), vegetable oil (sunflower), salt, sugar, soy

*Daily Intakes are based on average adult diet of 8700kJ

% daily intakes (DI) shows how much of each nutrient is in one serve compared to what an 'average adult' needs

Use the **per 100g** column to easily compare nutrients in similar food products

Salt will be listed as 'sodium'. Choose options with the least amount of sodium per 100g. Low salt options with less than 120mg of sodium per 100g are best

Ingredients are listed from most to least of weight. Use the ingredients list to identify ingredients you want to avoid or include in your eating pattern

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.
Life/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

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