

Label Reading

When going shopping, it is useful to understand the foods you are buying. To do this, you need to read the label and the marketing message doesn't tell you everything. For people with diabetes, Carbohydrates, Sugars, Fat and Salt are important facts to look at. Each of these nutrients alters our body, and at times in a negative way. To find out more about what you are eating by learning to read the information on food products.

Step 1: Read the Nutrition Information Panel

Sometimes it is not clear from the ingredient list whether a product is suitable to eat or not. It is often helpful to read the nutrition information panel. General guidelines for making healthy choices have been suggested below. Some foods may not fit these guidelines but still may be healthy choices.

Serve sizes differ between products, so compare foods by looking at the per 100g column.

Food Label Reading

		Per Serve	Per 100g
Weet Bix			
Serving per package		33	
Serving size		30g	(2 Biscuits)
	Energy	447kJ	1490Kj
	Protein	3.7g	12.4g
	Fat		
	Total	0.4g	1.4g
	Saturated	0.1g	0.3g
	Carbohydrate		
	Total	20.1g	67g
	Sugar	1.0g	3.3g
	Fibre	3.3g	11.0g
	Sodium	297mg	850mg
Ingredients: Whole grain wheat (97%), raw sugar, salt, barley malt extract, minerals (zinc gluconate, iron), vitamins (niacin, thiamine, riboflavin, folate).			

Beware, the manufacturer's serve size may not be the serve size you are eating. Always look at the 'per 100g' column to compare products.

To work out how many **exchanges/serves** there are in the food, divide the total carbohydrate per serve by 15*
*15g of carbohydrate = 1 exchange/serve.

Sodium

Excellent	120mg/100g
Good	400mg/100g

Look for 'no added salt' or 'salt reduced'

Fat

Total	Aim for < 10g/100g
Saturated	Aim for as low as possible
Trans	Aim for < 1g/100g for margarine

Oils & Margarine are high in fat. Choose poly and monounsaturated varieties and use sparingly

Carbohydrate

Sugars	Avoid Foods with added sugar
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Dietary Fibre

Excellent	5g/100g
Good	3g/100g

Step 2: Read the ingredients list

Ingredients are listed in order of quantity from the most to the least. Look for fat, sugar and salt.

If these are listed well down the ingredient list, the product will probably be suitable.

Example 1:

Rye Bread

Ingredients: unbleached flour, rye flour, rye meal, baker's yeast, gluten, salt, vinegar, vegetable oil, soy flour, semolina, roasted barley malt, oat bran, cultured whey, dry acid whey, emulsifiers (481, 472(e), 471), sugar, vitamin

Example 2

Chocolate Jaffa Cookies

Ingredients: wheat flour, margarine (contains animal fat), milk solids non-fat, flavours, compound chocolate, sugar.

If fat or sugar is at the top of the list the product may not be a good choice. Refer to the nutrition information panel if you are not sure.

Step 3: Look for Hidden Ingredients

Sometimes ingredients may be listed by a name you are not familiar with. Check the list below.

Fat	Added Sugars	Fibre	Salt
Animal fat	Fructose	Whole wheat	Salt
Shortening	Lactose	Wholemeal	Sodium
Beef fat	Honey	Wholegrain	Rock salt
Lard	Sucrose	Bran	Sea salt
Dripping	Sugar, raw sugar	Wheat bran	Onion salt
Cream	Invert sugar	Barley bran	Celery salt
Butter fat	Glucose syrup	Rolled oats	Garlic salt
Tallow	Malt, malt extract	Barley	Booster
Coconut oil	Dextrose	Oat bran	MSG (Monosodium
Palm oil	Treacle	Wheatmeal	Glutamate, 621)
Vegetable fat	Golden syrup	Rye	Meat / vegetable
Chocolate	Molasses	Buckwheat	extract
Monoglycerides	Maple syrup	Hi-maize starch	Stock cubes
Milk solids	Brown sugar	Resistant starch	Sodium bicarbonate
Hydrogenated oils	Corn syrup	BARLEYmax	Baking powder
Margarine	Concentrated fruit		Sodium
Chocolate or carob coating	juice		metabisulphite
Seeds, nuts & coconut			

Be a label reader

Food Labelling Laws

Nutrition Information Panel

Under current laws, nearly all manufactured foods must carry a nutrition information panel. The information must be presented in a standard format that shows the amount per serve and per 100g (or 100ml if liquid) of the food.

Foods that do not require a nutrition information panel include fresh fruit and vegetables, foods not sold in a package, foods contained within very small packages, single ingredient foods (e.g. tea and coffee) and food made and packaged from the premises from which it is sold (e.g. take-away foods).

Percentage of key ingredients

The percentage of key ingredients in a product is shown on the label – e.g. the percentage of strawberries in strawberry jam.

Saturated fat content

The saturated fat content of the food is displayed on the nutrition panel. Eating foods high in saturated fat can increase the risk of developing heart disease.

Trans fats

Under current laws, manufacturers are not required to display the trans fatty acid content on a label unless a claim is made about cholesterol and fats. Most foods sold in Australia are not high in trans fat, with the exception of some fast-foods. Eating foods high in trans fats can increase the risk of developing heart disease.

Declaration of presence of allergens

Foods, food ingredients or components of an ingredient that can cause severe adverse reactions in some individuals – such as peanuts and other nuts, seafood, fish, milk, gluten, eggs and soybeans – must be declared on the label, however small the amount.

Date marking

Foods that must be eaten before a certain time for safety reasons are date marked with a 'use by' date. These foods should not be sold or eaten after this date – e.g. milk. Most other foods are marked with a 'best before' date. It may still be safe to eat these foods after the 'best before' date but they may have lost some quality. Foods that have a 'best before' date can continue to be sold after the date provided the food is fit for human consumption.