

UNDERSTANDING FOOD LABELS

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LEARNING POINTS

- 1 Food labels are a source of useful nutritional information, but they are often confusing and incomplete.
- 2 Parents or carers may need help on how to read and interpret food labels.
- 3 European Commission laws require food labels to include a list of ingredients (including the 14 ingredients that commonly cause allergy) as well as guidance on storage and instructions for use.
- 4 Nutritional information is not mandatory but the number of calories and amounts of some nutrients are often displayed.
- 5 Fresh foods and packs within multipacks do not require a food label by law.
- 6 Recommended Daily Amounts (RDA) on labels are set by a European Committee and are for adults not children.
- 7 Reference Nutrient Intakes (RNI) are set by the Department of Health and are age-specific minimum recommendations for the UK.
- 8 Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA) are set by the food industry for either adults or children of a specified age.
- 9 Foods labelled as suitable for the age range of less than three years should comply with strict regulations on nutrient and pesticide content. Foods without such age-specific labelling do not have to comply with these regulations, even if they are packaged to appeal to young children.
- 10 In the UK there are two at-a-glance systems of labelling the nutritional values of foods: Traffic lights and GDAs. However, a red light or high value does not necessarily mean a food is unhealthy, as a healthy diet is composed of a balanced combination of different foods.
- 11 The amounts of sodium / salt, fat and sugar on a label denotes the total of the amounts naturally present in the fresh ingredients and the added amounts.

FOOD LABELS: WHAT THEY TELL YOU AND WHAT THEY DON'T

Toddlers need a healthy balanced diet to ensure they receive all the energy and nutrients that are essential for growth and development. [see Factsheets 1.1 and 1.2](#)

Food labels provide important nutritional information for parents and carers. However, this information is often confusing and incomplete. Although the labelling of commercial foods and drinks is regulated by European laws, much of the information that consumers need to choose nutritious food is not included because it is not compulsory. Moreover, many people find it difficult to understand the information on a label. Parents and carers may therefore need advice on how to interpret the information on labels when trying to make healthy food choices for their children.

This Factsheet will help you understand labels and how to interpret the information on them.



WHAT HAS TO BE ON A FOOD LABEL?

The law requires food labels to contain the following information:

- A product name or description - some food names are protected by law, and must comply with certain compositional regulations. For other food names there are no standards but the name should not mislead the consumer
- An ingredients list - the ingredients must be listed in descending order by weight, with the largest quantity ingredient first and the smallest last
- The amount of any ingredients included in the name of the food: e.g. the percentage amounts of the ingredients yogurt and strawberries must be displayed on the label of a food named as 'Strawberry Yogurt'
- Any of the 14 ingredients that can commonly cause food allergy must be included in the ingredients list - see page 07 - Allergy Information
- The 'best before' date which indicates the last date that the food is guaranteed to be safe to eat. This is because all packaged food will deteriorate but at different rates depending on the food type

- The contact details of the food producer, packer or seller
- The place of origin, in certain cases
- Any special storage conditions that should be observed
- Instructions for use.

Foods that do not require a label include:

- Fresh foods
- Multipacks – these need just one label which is usually found on the packet containing all the smaller packs. Each smaller pack inside does not need to be individually labelled. Once the outer packaging is discarded the labelling information will be lost.

WHAT ELSE MAY BE ON A FOOD LABEL?

Food labels do not have to include information about nutrients but many include the energy (calorie) content and the amounts of the following nutrients:

- protein
- carbohydrate
- sugar
- fat
- saturated fat
- fibre
- sodium
- salt

For a full list of nutrients and their functions see Factsheet 1.1i

This nutritional information may have been derived from the chemical analysis of the finished product or it may have been calculated from the nutritional content of the ingredients, using standard reference data.

Most labels do not display any information about vitamins and minerals, such as iron and zinc. However this information can be useful when deciding how nutritious the food is, particularly for toddlers or vegetarians. It must be included if a health claim is made about the nutrient.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH CLAIMS

Manufacturers can make health claims for their products, such as 'low-fat' or 'good source of calcium'. When they do this, the label must include the amount of the nutrient in the product. By law manufacturers are not allowed to mislead the customer or incorrectly describe a food. European Commission rules regulate specific nutrition claims. For instance foods labelled as a source of vitamin C must contain at least 15 per cent of an adult's RDA for vitamin C per adult portion.



HOW TO UNDERSTAND A FOOD LABEL

A typical food label might look like this:

Strawberry Yogurt

Ingredients:

Whole Milk Yogurt (88%) Strawberries (5%) Sugar, Tapioca Starch, Natural Flavouring, Concentrated Lemon Juice.

Nutrition Information:

Typical Values	Per 125g pot	Per 100g
Energy	123Kcal/526KJ	98Kcal/411KJ
Protein	5.4g	4.3g
Carbohydrate of which sugars	14.5g 13.75g	11.6g 11.0g
Fat of which saturates	4.6g 3g	3.7g 2.4g
Fibre	0.3g	0.2g
Sodium	0.1g	0.06g
Calcium	194mg*	155mg

* 24% of the recommended daily allowance

Allergy information:

This product contains milk

PRODUCT NAME

This product is Strawberry Yogurt.

INGREDIENTS

The ingredients are listed in descending order of weight. The largest ingredient in this product is whole milk yogurt and the smallest ingredient is concentrated lemon juice. Because yogurt and strawberry are mentioned in the product name of the food, the percentage of them in the product must be included.

There is 88g yogurt and 5g strawberries in 100g of the strawberry yogurt. Sugar is the next largest ingredient and must be less than 5g in 100g yogurt, otherwise it would have to be listed above 'strawberries' in the ingredients list. Flavourings are considered very stable, very safe and do not have to be named on the label.

The natural flavouring may have been extracted from strawberries but it is more likely to be a copy of the chemicals that give strawberries their distinct flavour. Information is given per 100g of food and per portion. Usually these are adult portions, so the amounts a toddler might eat may have to be estimated and calculated separately. In this case a toddler is likely to eat the whole 125g pot of yogurt.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

- The weight of each nutrient is listed per 100g or per portion
- Protein is expressed in grams
- Carbohydrate is expressed in grams and is the total figure for both starch and sugar
- 'Of which sugars' is expressed in grams and represents the sugar added plus any natural sugars in the ingredients. In this case it includes the added sugar as well as the lactose (milk sugar) in the yogurt and the fructose (fruit sugar) in the strawberries. It is impossible to work out from this information how much sugar is actually added: it will be less than five grams, as sugar appears below strawberry in the ingredients list
- The amount of starch in the whole pot is the difference between the figure for carbohydrate and sugar. Hence it can be estimated that $(11.6 - 11.0 = 0.6)$ 0.6g tapioca starch is present in this pot of yogurt
- Fat is expressed in grams and is the total of saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats
- 'Of which saturates' is the amount of saturated fat which is given in grams. This fat will all be in the milk used to make the yogurt as there are no other ingredients present which contain fat
- Fibre is measured in grams. It is found in cereals, fruit and vegetables. The small amount in this product is from the strawberries
- Sodium is measured in grams. The small amount in this product is the natural sodium found in milk as there is no added salt shown in the ingredients list. To calculate the equivalent salt content, multiply the weight of sodium by 2.5
- Calcium is measured in milligrams (mg). The percentage RDA is an adult value. Young children need less total calcium than adults so this pot of yogurt provides 55 per cent of a one-to-three-year-olds daily calcium requirement as the RNI for this age group is 350mg calcium
- Allergy information: this yogurt only contains one of the 14 ingredients that commonly cause allergies. This is milk.



WHAT ARE RDAs, RNIs AND GDAs?

- **RDA (Recommended Daily Amount)** of a nutrient is the average amount recommended to be eaten every day. RDAs apply to the whole population of the country and are set by a European Committee. The figures indicate suitable amounts for adults, not for babies, toddlers or children.
 - **RNI (Recommended Nutrient Intake)** is the minimum amount of a nutrient that is recommended for specific age groups in the UK. RNIs have been set by the Department of Health and there are several age group bands. Children require differing amounts of nutrients as they grow. The age bands are quite narrow: birth to three months, four to six months, seven to nine months, 10 to 12 months, one to three years, four to six years, seven to 10 years, 11 to 14 years, 15 to 18 years, 19 to 50 years, 50+ years. For each age group there is a complete set of RNIs for each nutrient. The exceptions are fat, carbohydrate and sugar which have a dietary reference value (DRV) set. DRV is the recommended average amount not a minimum amount.
 - **GDA (Guideline Daily Amount)** is a term developed for food labels by a working group set up by the grocery industry. GDAs are given for certain populations: women, men and children aged five to 10 years. Food manufacturers will include the GDA appropriate to one of these age groups on their packaging.
- RDAs and GDAs are not applicable for toddlers. Table 1 shows the average energy requirements and RNIs or DRVs for nutrients for toddlers aged one to three years compared to the GDAs that are shown on some food labels.

Table 1.

	Guideline Daily Amounts ¹				Recommended Nutrient Intakes or Dietary Reference Values ²	
	Adult Female	Adult Male	Children 5-10 yrs		Boys 1-3 yrs	Girls 1-3 yrs
Calories	2000kcal	2500kcal	1800kcal	Calories	1230kcal	1165kcal
Protein	45g	55g	24g	Protein	14.5g	14.5g
Carbohydrates	230g	300g	220g	Carbohydrates	154g	146g
Sugars	90g	120g	85g	Non-milk extrinsic sugar*	34g	32g
Fat	70g	95g	70g	Fat	48g	45g
Saturated Fat	20g	30g	20g	Saturated Fat	15g	14g
Fibre	24g	24g	15g	Fibre	6-8g	6-8g
Sodium	2.4g	2.4g	1.6g	Sodium	0.5g	0.5g
Salt	6g	6g	4g	Salt	2g ³	2g ³

* Non-milk extrinsic sugars include table sugar, added sugars in various forms (see list on page 08) and fructose in fruit juices and processed fruit. They do not include lactose in milk and milk products, nor fructose in fresh whole fruit.

AT-A-GLANCE LABELLING SYSTEMS

In recent years two different systems of giving at-a-glance nutritional information have been introduced in the UK. They are often included on the front of food packets. Both systems can be used to compare the energy (calorie) and nutrient contents of two similar products.

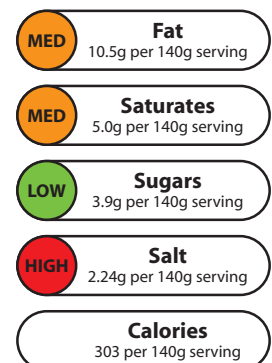
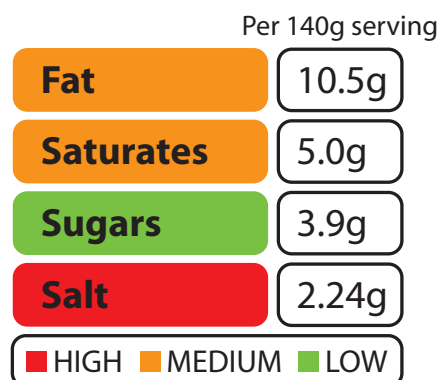
THE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

This system indicates whether a food or drink has a high, medium or low amount of the following:

- calories
- fat
- saturated fat
- sugar
- salt

These will be shown either per 100g or per serving (portion size) which will be specified - usually as an adult serving size that is not necessarily relevant for a toddler.

The traffic light system may appear in one of the following three formats (label for American pepperoni pizza) shown below:





High levels of nutrients are marked in red, low levels are marked in green and medium levels are marked in amber. The number of calories or amount of nutrients per adult portion of the product may also be displayed. It is important to remember that these are adult serving sizes - not toddler serving sizes.

There are some disadvantages to the traffic light system. All foods are classified according to the same high, medium or low standard, regardless of the type of food or how nutritious the food may be overall (see Table 2). This can mislead the consumer into thinking a nutritious food should be avoided because it has some 'red lights' on the label.

For example cheese is a nutritious food for toddlers because it contains calcium. But it will always be labelled as high in saturated fat and salt because cheese is made from whole milk and preserved with salt. Similarly any food containing milk or fruit will be labelled as high in sugar because of the natural sugars in milk (lactose) and fruit (fructose). Bread and bread rolls are classified as having a medium salt content.

Table 2: Classification of high, medium and low nutrient levels in food and drinks using the traffic light system

Classification	High	Medium	Low
Colour on traffic light label:	Red	Amber	Green
Amounts per 100g food/drink			
Sugar	≥ 15g	5 - 15g	≤ 5g
Fat	> 20g	3 - 20g	< 3g
Saturated fat	> 5g	1.5 - 5g	< 1.5g
Sodium	> 0.6g	0.1 - 0.6g	< 0.1g
Salt	> 1.5g	0.3g - 1.5g	< 0.3g

THE GDA SYSTEM

This system displays the number of calories and amounts of nutrients in an adult serving or in a serving for five to 10 year old children. It also indicates the percentage guideline daily amount (GDA) that this represents (shown in Table 1).

The disadvantages of GDA labelling are:

- percentages do not apply to other age groups such as toddlers
- consumers need to understand percentages, and research indicates that few do

Each 140g serving contains:



So 2.24g = 37% of your salt GDA

of an adult's guideline daily amount

FOODS MARKETED FOR BABIES AND TODDLERS

If a food is labelled as suitable for an infant or toddler under three years of age (e.g. 10+ months) it should comply with regulations on nutrient content which includes a minimum level of certain key nutrients and a maximum limit on salt, sodium, fat and sugar⁴. They must also comply with a very low maximum limit on pesticides.

Foods without age indications do not have to comply with these regulations. Therefore a yogurt that is not marked with an age recommendation, but whose packaging is clearly aimed at young children, will not be limited in the amount of sugar added nor have to have a minimum nutrient content.

ALLERGY INFORMATION

Labels are required by law to list any ingredient that commonly causes allergies. If a pre-packaged food contains any of the following 14 ingredients, they must be clearly listed on the label.

- celery
- cereals containing gluten (wheat, barley, rye and oats)
- crustaceans i.e. shellfish such as prawn, crab and lobster
- eggs
- fish
- lupin
- milk
- molluscs i.e. another type of shellfish such as mussels and oysters
- mustard
- nuts that grow on trees such as almonds, hazelnuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, cashews, pecans, pistachios and macadamia nuts
- peanuts
- sesame seeds
- soybeans
- sulphur dioxide and sulphites if they are above 10mg per kg in solid food or per litre of liquid (these are preservatives often used in some foods and drinks).

Some manufacturers put statements about ingredients that cause allergies in a box near the ingredients list. The inclusion of this box is not compulsory and those with allergies are advised to read the list of ingredients

carefully and not to rely on information in this box alone.

see Factsheet 4.2 for more information on managing food allergy.

WHAT FOOD LABELS DO NOT TELL YOU

1 Whether the food is nutritious and a good choice as part of a healthy diet

A food label that displays a high amount of salt, fat and sugar does not necessarily indicate if this is acceptable or not for that type of food, or the nutritious ingredients used to make it. The amounts may be acceptable for that food type or they may be excessively high because excess salt, fat or sugar has been added.

A healthy balanced nutritious diet includes a combination of foods from the five food groups. see Factsheet 1.2 Nutritious foods vary in their nutritional content, some being high in certain nutrients and low in other nutrients. The combination of foods in a healthy balanced diet includes some foods that are high in salt, fat or sugar. As long as these foods are eaten in combination with other foods that are low in these nutrients, the overall meal should have a healthy balance.

Nutritious foods that are classified as:

- high in fat: cheese, egg yolk, quiche, pizza, dried milk powder and some cakes and puddings
- medium or high in salt: cheese, bread and processed meat
- high in sugar: fruit, fruit juices, milk puddings, fruit puddings and some cakes

see Factsheet 1.9 for advice on choosing nutritious convenience foods.

- Pour contents into a small saucepan.
- Simmer for 2-3 minutes, stirring.
- Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information		
Typical Values	Per 100g	Per pack 170g
Energy	283kJ/68kcal	481kJ/116kcal
Protein	1.5g	2.6g
Carbohydrate	3.4g	5.8g
of which sugars	1.7g	2.9g
Fat	5.4g	9.2g
of which saturates	3.5g	6.0g
Fibre	1.0g	1.7g
Sodium	0.4g	0.7g

INGREDIENTS: Water, Milk, Double Cream Thickeners (Modified Maize Starch, Xanthan Gum), Salt, Red Pepper Concentrate, Yeast (Ammonia Caramel), Black Pepper, Garlic Pepper Extract (Salt, Pepper).

Allergen Advice

Contains: Milk

2 The added sugar content

Even though the total amount of sugar is displayed on the label it is not always easy to determine how much sugar has been added. This total figure for sugar includes natural sugars occurring in the food as well as sugar added as an ingredient. Natural sugars are:

- **lactose** - in milk
- **fructose** - in fruit
- **maltose** - present in starchy foods

Additional sugar may be added in various forms:

- sucrose or table sugar
- dextrose
- glucose syrup
- corn syrup
- fructose
- golden syrup
- honey
- fruit juice concentrate

Therefore the added sugar listed in the ingredients may be divided into two or three forms giving the impression that very little sugar has been added. For example biscuits, cakes or puddings may be sweetened with a combination of sugar, glucose syrup and fruit juice concentrate.

When looking for low-sugar foods it is best to compare the amounts of sugar per 100g within food products and buy the one with the lower sugar content. However it should not be assumed that any foods are sugar-free because there are natural sugars in most foods. It is important that toddlers enjoy their food and a little sugar is appropriate in their diet.

see Factsheet 4.5

3 The added salt content

Sodium is a component of salt, and sodium or salt are present in most foods. For example fresh meat and milk contain small amounts of sodium naturally but no salt. The total sodium on the label includes the sodium in ingredients as well as any salt that is added to enhance flavour or as part of the cooking process or as a food preservative. Labels display either total sodium content or the equivalent total salt content (multiplying sodium content by 2.5) or both values. From these total amounts it is not possible to know how much salt has been added during processing and how much sodium is from other ingredients.

4 The added fat content

Nutritious foods such as eggs, meat, oily fish, milk and cheese all naturally contain some fat along with the fat soluble vitamins A, D and E. This fat is an acceptable part of a healthy balanced diet. Ready meals and food products that include these food ingredients will naturally contain some fat. Additional fat is added to some foods by adding oil, cream, lard, margarine or butter to enhance flavour and as part of the cooking process. The total fat content on the food label does not indicate how much fat is found naturally in the ingredients and how much is added to enhance flavour or as part of the cooking process.



FINDING OUT MORE

Food labels do not contain all the information needed to judge a food's true nutritional content. For this it is necessary to know the amounts of all the nutrients present, as described in [Factsheet 1.1i](#). This information may be available directly from the food company, either on its website or by e-mail, mail or telephone. Registered dietitians can give more information on the nutritional value of various foods and can be contacted via a GP, Primary Care Trust or www.freelancedietitians.org.

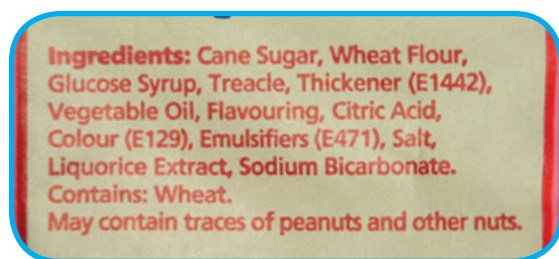
[Factsheet 1.2](#) describes how to offer toddlers a combination of foods to provide all the nutrients needed for growth and development. These foods can be fresh and unlabelled or carefully chosen packaged and labelled foods. [Factsheet 1.9](#) gives tips on how to choose nutritious packaged food by using common sense and some of the information on labels.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS FOUND ON FOOD LABELS

Antioxidants - help foods last longer by preventing the fats, oils and certain vitamins from combining with oxygen in the air and becoming rancid and losing colour. If this happens it makes food taste 'off'. Vitamin C, also called ascorbic acid or E300, is one of the most widely used antioxidants in food.

Colours - are added to food and drinks to give them a consistent colour. They may be used to replace the natural colour lost during food processing or storage. Natural colours come from foods e.g. caramel (E150a), which is used in products such as gravy and sweet drinks; and curcumin (E100), a yellow colour extracted from turmeric roots. Many colourings are artificially created and all are tested for safety. However the Food Standards Agency (FSA) warns that combinations of the following artificial colours: sunset yellow (E110), quinoline yellow (E104), carmoisine (E122), allura red (E129), tartrazine (E102) and ponceau 4R (E124) may be linked to a negative effect on children's behaviour³. These colours were often used in soft drinks, sweets and ice cream but most manufacturers are now replacing them.

E numbers - are food additives that have passed safety tests and been approved for use throughout the European Union. Some of these additives will be nutritious, such as vitamin C while others will be synthetic chemicals. The additives assigned E numbers include antioxidants, colours, flavour enhancers, preservatives and sweeteners. Additives may be labelled by their E number, their chemical name or both. Some manufacturers use E numbers on labels and some do not.



Emulsifiers - are additives such as lecithins (E322) that are used to help mix ingredients that would normally separate out (such as oil and water).

Flavour enhancers - are used to bring out the flavour in foods. Monosodium glutamate (E621), known as MSG, is the most well known and it is added to processed foods, especially soups, sauces and sausages. Savoury snacks, ready meals and condiments also contain them.

Flavourings - are controlled by different laws so they do not have E numbers. Flavourings are added in much smaller amounts than the other additives and they give a particular flavour or smell. They may be extracted from food or more usually they are synthetic copies of the chemicals in food that provide the flavour. They are considered very stable and very safe and do not have to be named on ingredient labels.

Gelling agents - are used to change the consistency of food. The most common gelling agent is pectin (E440), which is used to make jam.

Hydrogenated oil or fat - hydrogenation is one of the processes that can be used to turn liquid oil into solid fat. The final product of this process is called hydrogenated vegetable oil, or sometimes hydrogenated fat. Hydrogenated fat contains more saturated fats and trans fats than fat that has not been hydrogenated. It is used in some biscuits, cakes, pastry, margarine and other processed foods.

Ingredients - are specific foods or food products which make up a food - milk, meat, oil, sugar or salt, for instance.

Lupins - are plants and the seeds of some types can be used in foods such as seeded bread and can also be ground to make lupin flour, which is used sometimes in foods such as pastries. This is more common in Europe than the UK.

Nutrients - are chemicals within foods that are needed by the body - protein, fat, carbohydrate, sugar, vitamins, minerals such as iron, zinc and sodium. For a full list of nutrients and their functions, sources and requirements see **Factsheet 1.1i**.

Preservatives - delay food from 'going off' giving it a longer shelf life. Most food that has a long shelf life is likely to include preservatives, unless another method of preserving has been used such as pasteurising, freezing, canning or drying. For example, to stop mould or bacteria growing, dried fruit is often treated with sulphur dioxide (E220); and bacon, ham, corned beef and other cured meats are often treated with nitrite and nitrate (E249 to E252) during the curing process. More traditional preservatives such as sugar, salt and vinegar are also still used to preserve some foods. For example sugar in jam and tinned fruit, salt in cheese and vinegar to pickle vegetables. Foods containing the preservative sodium benzoate (E211, most commonly found in soft drinks) in combination with the colours listed above should not be given to toddlers as a recent study has shown that it may have a negative effect on behaviour. Some antioxidants (see above) are also preservatives.

Stabilisers - such as locust bean gum (E410) made from carob beans, help stop mixed ingredients such as oil and water from separating out.

Sweeteners - are often used instead of sugar in products such as fizzy drinks, squash, yogurt and chewing gum. 'Intense sweeteners', such as aspartame (E951), saccharin (E954) and acesulfame-K (E950) are many times sweeter than sugar and so only very small amounts are added. Toddlers do not need to completely avoid sweeteners but the less they have the better as sweeteners are artificial chemicals.

The sweetener sorbitol (E420) is often used in quantities that can cause diarrhoea in toddlers and should be avoided.

Thickeners - such as wheat starch, help give body to food in the same way as adding flour thickens a sauce.

References and Further Reading

1. Guideline Daily Amounts Technical Working Group Report, 2005, IGD, Letchmore Heath, Watford, UK: www.igd.com www.gdalabel.org.uk
2. Adapted and calculated from Nutritional Requirements for Children in Health and Disease 2008 Produced by the Dietetic Department Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust
3. Food Standards Agency Website: <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/>
4. The Processed Cereal-based Foods and Baby Foods for Infants and Young Children (England) Regulations 2003 (SI 2003 No 3207): <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/si/si2003/20033207.htm>

Additional copies of this Factsheet can be downloaded from www.infantandtoddlerforum.org

UNDERSTANDING FOOD LABELS GUIDANCE & TIPS FOR PARENTS



- Food labels contain a lot of useful information. But they can be confusing and do not always tell you everything you need to know.
- By law food labels must include information on ingredients, guidance on storage, a 'best before' date, allergy advice and instructions for use.
- There are 14 ingredients that commonly cause allergies. If a food contains any of these, they must be listed on the label.
- Food labelling laws do not apply to fresh food or individual packs within multipacks.
- If a food is labelled as suitable for children under three years old, it should comply with strict rules on what it can and cannot contain. If the food does not contain an explicit age recommendation, these rules do not apply, even if the food is clearly packaged to appeal to young children.
- RDA means Recommended Daily Amount. It is set for adults not children.
- GDA means Guideline Daily Amount. It is set by the food industry for either adults or children of a specified age.
- RNI means Reference Nutrient Intake. It gives the recommended intake for specific ages.
- The traffic light system offers a quick way to judge the amount of calories, fat, carbohydrate, sugar and salt in a food. It uses red, amber and green labels to show whether a food or drink has a high, medium or low amount of the following:
 - calories
 - fat
 - saturated fat
 - sugar
 - salt
- A red or amber light does not necessarily mean a food is unhealthy. You need to judge its overall content, and consider it within a healthy balanced daily diet. For example cheese is a nutritious food for toddlers because it contains calcium, protein and certain vitamins, but it will be labelled as high in saturated fat and salt because of how cheese is made. Milk and fruit are healthy foods but both contain natural sugars. Foods containing milk or fruit will therefore usually be labelled high in sugar.
- When looking for low sugar foods it is best to compare the sugar contents of comparable foods.
- Do not expect any foods to be sugar-free because there are natural sugars in most foods. It is important that toddlers enjoy their food and a little sugar is normal.
- If you want to know more about the content of a food you can visit the food company's website or contact it directly. For more detailed dietary advice you can contact a registered dietitian via your GP, Primary Care Trust or www.freelancedietitians.org.

	Guideline Daily Amounts				Recommended Nutrient Intakes	
	Adult Female	Adult Male	Children 5-10 yrs		Boys 1-3 yrs	Girls 1-3 yrs
Calories	2000kcal	2500kcal	1800kcal	Calories	1230kcal	1165kcal
Protein	45g	55g	24g	Protein	14.5g	14.5g
Carbohydrates	230g	300g	220g	Carbohydrates	154g	146g
Sugars	90g	120g	85g	Non-milk extrinsic sugar*	34g	32g
Fat	70g	95g	70g	Fat	48g	45g
Saturated Fat	20g	30g	20g	Saturated Fat	15g	14g
Fibre	24g	24g	15g	Fibre	6-8g	6-8g
Salt	6g	6g	4g	Salt	2g	2g
Sodium	2.4g	2.4g	1.6g	Sodium	0.8g	0.8g

* Non-milk extrinsic sugars include table sugar, other forms of sugar including syrups and glucose, and fructose in honey, fruit juices and processed fruit. They do not include lactose in milk and milk products, nor fructose in fresh whole fruit.



Feeding young children:
practical advice from experts

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