

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 nutritional information, an ingredients list, 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 emphasised in the ingredients list.
- 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.
- RI means Reference Intake. It is set for adults not children.
- RNI means Reference Nutrient Intake. It gives the recommended intake for specific ages.
- Traffic light colours on labels offer a quick way to judge the amount of calories, fat, saturated fat, 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.

	Reference Intakes		Recommended Nutrient Intakes or Dietary Reference Values	
	Adult		Boys 1-3 yrs	Girls 1-3 yrs
Energy in Kilocalories	2000kcal	Calories	765–1171kcal	717–1076kcal
Fat	70g	Fat	30–45g	28–42g
Saturated Fat	20g	Saturated Fat	9–14g	9–13g
Carbohydrates	260g	Carbohydrates	96–146g	90–135g
Sugars	90g	Free sugars*	9.6–14.6g	9–13.5g
Protein	50g	Protein	14.5g	14.5g
Salt	6g	Salt	2g	2g

* Fat calculated as 35% of energy

* Saturated fat calculated as 11% of energy

* Carbohydrates calculated as 50% of energy

* Free sugars calculated as 5% of energy. They include table sugar, added sugars in various forms and fructose in fruit juices and processed fruit. They do not include lactose in milk and milk products, nor fructose in fresh whole fruit.



The healthiest start in life
from pregnancy to preschool

The Infant & Toddler Forum CIC is committed to a world where every child has the healthiest start in life

Copyright rests with the Infant & Toddler Forum CIC
Infant & Toddler Forum CIC. Registered in England and Wales. Company limited by guarantee. Company no. 12303732