

Looking at nutrition labels

Nutrition labels can be used to help you choose products that fit into a healthy, balanced diet. BNF has produced a quick guide to understanding nutrition information on labels.

What MUST be declared – Back-of-pack nutrition information

It is mandatory (required by law) in the UK for certain nutrition information to be declared on nutrition labels. Information on energy and the following nutrients has to be provided in a certain order:

Energy (in kilojoules, kJ and kilocalories, kcal), and the amount of fat (g), saturates (g), carbohydrates (g), sugars (g), protein (g) and salt (g). Information must be given **per 100g or 100ml** and can also be given **per portion**.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION TYPICAL VALUES		
	Per 100g	Per 15g
Energy	1991kJ/475kcal	299kJ/71kcal
Fat	20.0g	3.0g
Of which saturates	1.6g	0.2g
Carbohydrate	63.0g	9.5g
of which sugars	20.0g	3.0g
Protein	6.8g	1.0g
Salt	0.75g	0.11g

Total sugars include free sugars and sugars naturally present in foods and drinks (e.g. lactose in milk)

Some nutrient information can be included voluntarily, such as monounsaturates, polyunsaturates, fibre, vitamins and minerals (if present in significant amounts - that's 15% or more of the nutrient reference value).

Front-of-pack nutrition information

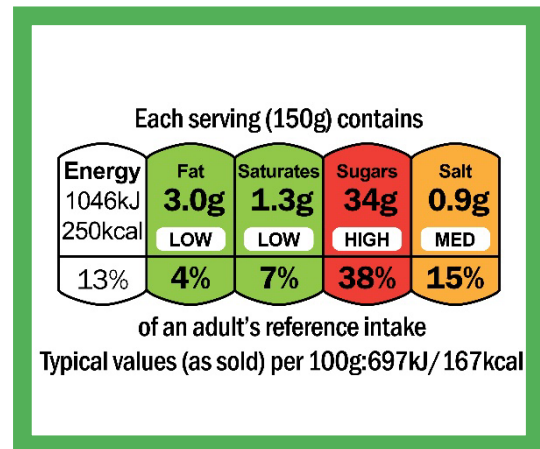
Nutrition information can also be repeated on the front-of-pack. This nutrition labelling is voluntary. If provided, it can display at-a-glance information on the amount of energy only (calories and kilojoules per portion and per 100g/ml), or the amount of energy plus fat, saturates, sugars and salt.

Traffic light labelling

Some manufacturers and most major UK supermarkets use traffic light labelling on pre-packed foods and drinks to show whether a product is high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) in fat, saturates, sugars and salt.

Colour coding can be a useful tool to help choose between products - try and go for more greens and ambers, and fewer reds!

Nutritional information on labels may also be expressed as a percentage of the reference intake (RI). These are a guide to the maximum amount of fat, saturates, sugar and salt that adults should eat each day.



Energy or nutrient	Reference Intake
Energy	8400kJ/200kcal
Fat	70g
Saturates	20g
Carbohydrates	260g
Sugars	90g
Protein	50g
Salt	6g

RIs are based on requirements for adult females.

Nutrition and health claims on labels - what do they mean?

Nutrition and health claims on food labels must comply with government regulations. Only approved nutrition and health claims can be used on pack. Approved claims will have been through a strict authorisation process and are based on scientific evidence, to make sure that claims are not misleading.

Nutrition claims

A nutrition claim is a claim that suggests a food or drink has a particular nutritional benefit. Some examples of nutrition claims you may see on labels are:

- **Reduced fat** – at least 30% less fat than the standard product.
- **Source of fibre** – contains at least 3g fibre per 100g or at least 1.5 fibre per 100kcal.
- **Source of calcium** – contains at least 15% of the nutrient reference value for calcium per 100g (at least 7.5% per 100ml for drinks).

Health claims

A health claim is a claim which refers to a relationship between a food (or one of its components, such as a vitamin or mineral) and health. Some examples of health claims you may see on labels are:

- Oat beta-glucan has been shown to lower blood cholesterol. High cholesterol is a risk factor in the development of coronary heart disease.
- Protein contributes to the maintenance of muscle mass.
- Vitamin D contributes to the maintenance of normal bones.

Allergen labelling

Pre-packed food

Any of the 14 main food allergens (see table on following page) must be emphasised clearly in the ingredients list (e.g. in bold, italics, underlined, upper case or colour) so it stands out from the other ingredients.

Ingredients: Water, Carrots, Onions, Red Lentils (5.6%), Potatoes, Cauliflower, Leeks, Peas, Cornflour, **Wheat** flour, Salt, **Cream**, Yeast Extract, Concentrated Tomato Paste, Garlic, Whey (**Milk**), Sugar, **Celery** Seed, Sunflower Oil, Dried Oregano, White Pepper, Parsley.

Allergenic ingredients must be declared with a clear reference to the allergen e.g. Whey (milk)

Precautionary allergen labelling can be used to show that there may be a risk of a food product being affected by allergen cross-contamination (when traces of allergens get into products accidentally during the manufacturing, handling, transport or storage of foods), such as:

- 'May contain X'
- 'Not suitable for someone with X allergy'



Free-from

If a label states that a product is 'free-from milk' or 'peanut free', the final product is completely free of the particular allergen (including all ingredients and packing materials), as well as free from cross-contamination from other foods made at the same site.

Products labelled as gluten-free can contain a maximum of 20mg gluten/kg.

The top 14 food allergens

The image to the right shows the 14 main allergens in Europe. In UK adults, the foods that most commonly cause an allergic reaction are:

- peanuts
- tree nuts
- fish
- crustaceans (shellfish)



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Note: Further to UK departure from the EU, EU Regulations and tertiary legislation relating to nutrition (Regulation (EC) 1924/2006) have been retained amended by the Nutrition (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and the Nutrition (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.