



Make wiser food choices by knowing what to look for on nutritional labels

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IN CONSULTATION WITH SERENE TAY, PRINCIPAL DIETITIAN

# Read it right

Eating better begins at the supermarket when we make our choices for the fridge, freezer and pantry. Reading nutritional labels correctly is the first step to make sure your kitchen is stocked with healthier alternatives.

According to Serene Tay, Principal Dietitian, JurongHealth, some common obstacles when reading labels include poor eyesight, a complicated ingredients list or misinterpreting the numbers. **“The nutrition information is presented as ‘per serving’ and ‘per 100g’, which may be complicated to understand,”** Ms Tay pointed out.

“Manufacturers may also use less common names for ingredients such as salt (sodium chloride) and sugar (maltose or fructose), so people may think a certain ingredient is not in the ingredient list.” Some nutritional claims such as ‘low cholesterol’ or ‘no added sugar’ may also be misunderstood as a certain food being cholesterol- or sugar-free. Reading the nutrition labels is a good way to know the actual calorie, fat, sodium, sugar and cholesterol content.

## Demystifying nutrition labels

**Servings per package** The number of servings in a single container or packet. There could be more than one serving per package.

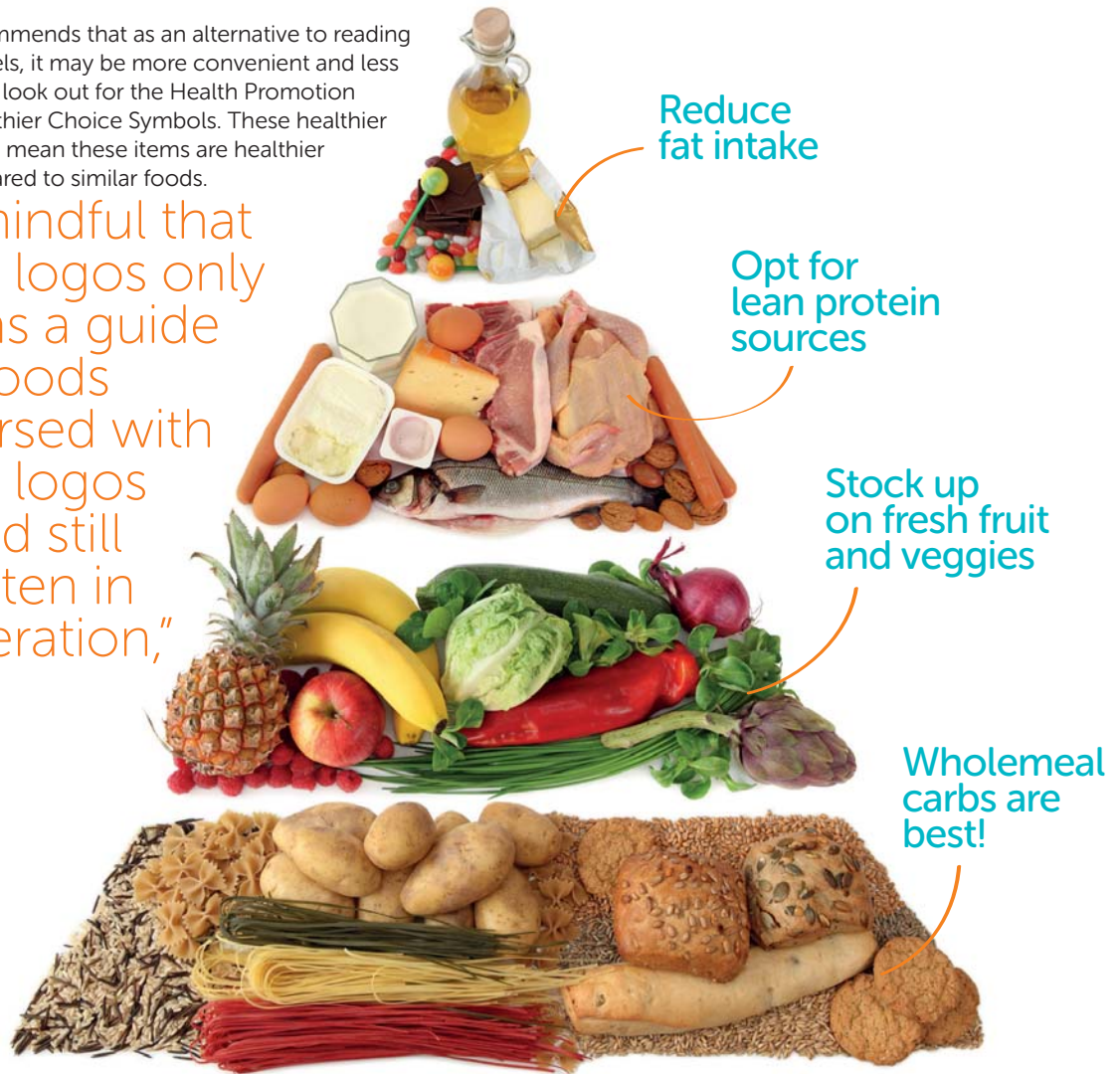
**Serving size** This measure of a single serving is defined by the manufacturer and varies from product to product. Be aware that the single serving indicated may be less than what you would typically eat. A packet of potato chips may contain 160 calories per 30g serving and contain ten servings. This means if you eat the whole packet, you would have had a whopping 1,600 calories.

**Comparing values** When choosing between items look at the ‘per 100g’ or ‘per 100ml’ information as it offers a similar base of comparison rather than serving size, which varies.

**Nutritional data** Focus on the key nutrients that are important to you. If you are on a diet, look at the energy or calorie values. For high blood pressure, zoom in on the sodium or check the saturated fat and cholesterol amounts if you have high cholesterol. Be mindful of fat content; no more than 30 per cent of your daily calories should come from fat.

Ms Tay recommends that as an alternative to reading nutrition labels, it may be more convenient and less confusing to look out for the Health Promotion Board's Healthier Choice Symbols. These healthier choice logos mean these items are healthier when compared to similar foods.

"Be mindful that these logos only acts as a guide and foods endorsed with these logos should still be eaten in moderation," she advised.



## look for the 'healthy triangle'



20% more whole grains



25% more calcium



25% less sugar



25% less sodium



25% less saturated fat



Snacks lower in fat, saturated fat, sodium or sugar compared to regular products