Reading Food Labels The Complete Guide

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NUTRITION INFORMATIO

Servings per package: 4						
Serving size: 200ml (1 glass)						
	Per serving					
Energy	84 kcal	42 kcal				
Protein	6 g	3 g				
Total fat saturated fat trans fat	2.4 g 1 g 0 g	1.2 g 0.5 g 0 g				
Cholesterol	9 mg	4.5 mg				
Carbohydrate	9.6 g	4.8 g				
Dietary fibre	1 g	0.5 g				
mu	125.8 mg	60 Martin				



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	125.8 mg	62.9				
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10 KEEP JUICE FRESHES BEFRIGERATED AT 4°C OR L



Why should I read food labels?

Whether you are concerned about your weight, or health, or for any reason, it is always important to know the kind of food you are putting into your body. Food labels help us to make healthier and safer food choices by:

- Informing us if the food is fresh or out of date
- Explaining how to store, prepare or cook the food we buy
- Listing product ingredients
- · Warning us if the food contains food allergens and additives
- · Giving us information on where the food was produced and by which company
- · Telling us which nutrients, in what amounts, are in a product
- Highlighting to us health claims and functions of different types of nutrients
- Informing us on healthier food products that we could look out for

Food Labelling

Basic information on food labels

1. Product name Describes the food and its contents. NUTRITION INFORMATION Servings per package: 12 Serving size: 28g (about 5 pieces) Per servina Per 100a Energy 412 kcal* 115 kcal Protein 1.9 g Total fat 16.3 g 4.6 g aturated fat Ug Og trans fat Cholesterol 0 ma 0 ma Carbohydrat 62.2 a 17.4 0 **Dietary fibre** 25 ma r. Malt Extra um chloride, th ride, riboflavin, yeast ica flour en Infomation: Contains Wheat actured on equipment that also ses chocolate containing nuts. **ed by:** Ny pte ltd Wheat Biscuit onal Road Singapore 123456 ABC Call Centre 180 123 1233 NET WEIGHT: 360g Store in cold dry place

Expiry Date: 31 May 2013

2. Nutrition information

Includes nutrients found in one serving or in 100g or 100ml of food.

3. Ingredient list

Contains all ingredients, listed in descending order by weight. Refer to Appendix A for a list of common ingredient names.

4. Origin of the product

Contains the country of origin, name and address of the local manufacturer, packer, importer or distributor.

5. Usage instructions Contains storage and usage instructions.

6. Date Marking

Indicates the "Expiry date", "Use by", "Sell by" or "Best before" date.

7. Net quantity

Indicates the actual net weight (solid food) or volume (liquid food) of the food, excluding the packaging. For canned solid food packed in liquid, the weight of the drained solid should also be labelled.



1. The expiry date indicates the date after which food should not be sold. It may also be labelled as "Use by", "Sell By" or "Best Before".

2. The expiry date will no longer be valid once the package is opened. Consumers should always check that the food is in wholesome condition before consuming.

3. Consume food products before the expiry date for best nutrition quality, flavour and texture. Consuming expired food products may cause food poisoning and put your health at risk.

4. Store food products according to food label instructions to ensure best quality before expiry date.

Note: "Expiry date" is different from "packing date", which is usually found on raw produce like raw meat. The nearer the "packing date" is to the date of purchase, the fresher the raw food.

The Ingredient List



1. This shows the ingredients in the food, listed in descending order by weight. The first ingredient on the list is of the highest amount, followed by the second, third and so on. This also includes compound ingredients that are made up of two or more ingredients.

2. Food additives are usually identified as the last few ingredients on the list. Food additives are permitted substances added to food to preserve it or to enhance its flavour, taste and appearance. Consumers abstaining from certain ingredients or additives may refer to the ingredient list to make an informed food choice.

3. Allergy sufferers may identify allergenic food ingredients such as milk and soy using the ingredient list. Consumers should take note of the source of each ingredient used in the food as it may have been derived from potential food allergens.

4. Some food products may carry allergen information in a separate statement.

5. Statements such as "contains peanuts" or "contains milk" inform consumers of the presence of allergenic ingredients.

Note: Refer to Appendix B for further information on the ingredient list.

Manufacturers'/Importers' Details



1. Contact information like country of origin, name and address of local importer, distributor or vendor are declared on imported food products labels. Locally manufactured products are labelled with name and address of local manufacturer or packer.

2. The name and business address of the manufacturer or supplier are also used to enable food recalls. Sometimes, the lot/batch number may be used to facilitate food recalls as well. Food is recalled when it poses a possible public health and safety risk to consumers.

3. If you are concerned about or dissatisfied with any food product, you may provide feedback to the supplier using the contact information provided.

To ensure quality, consumers should avoid products that are:

- Stored in dented, bloated, rusty or torn packages.
- Past their expiry dates.
- Stored inappropriately. Chilled products should be stored in chillers while frozen products should be stored in freezers below the load line.

Understanding the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) —

What information can I get from the NIP on food labels?

	Examp	le: Dried Apri	cots	
	NUTRITIC	N INFORM		
	Serving	gs per package	e: 4	4 servings of apricot
Amount eaten in	Serving size	e: 47g (about 5	in each packet.	
a single serving.		Per serving	Per 100g	One serving of apricot is equivalent to about 5 pieces
 Helps you decide how much to buy. 	Energy^	106 kcal*	225 kcal*	of dried apricots (47g).
• Use it to plan your shopping list and family meals.	Protein^	1.2 g	2.5 g	
	Total fat^ saturated fat trans fat	0 g 0 g 0 g	0 g 0 g 0 g	
Nutrient content	Cholesterol	0 mg	0 mg	
of apricots per serving and per 100g .	Carbohydrate^	26 g	55 g	
	Dietary fibre	3.5 g	7.5 g	
F	Sodium	12 mg	25 mg	

^ Basic nutrients to be labelled

* 1 kcal = 4.2kJ

The "Per serving" column lists the nutrient content in one serving of food. Consumers may use this information to assess the nutrient contribution of each serving of food to their daily intake. Refer to Appendix C for the Recommended Dietary Intakes.

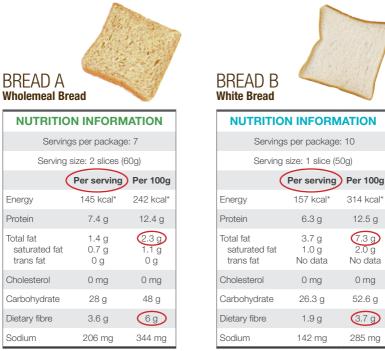
The "Per 100g" column helps consumers to compare the nutrient content of similar products.

Most food products in the market are labelled with NIPs, although this information is only compulsory when a nutrient or health claim on food is made.

Comparing Nutritional Information

How do I use nutrition information to compare foods?

Here is an example. Which is healthier, Bread A or Bread B?



*1 kcal = 4.2kJ

As the serving sizes of these two products differ, comparing them using the "per serving" values would be inaccurate.

- We can make a fair comparison only by using values in the "per 100g" column.
- Bread A contains lower fat and lower saturated fat and higher dietary fibre than Bread B. Thus it is a healthier choice as compared to Bread B.

Practical Tips When Comparing Food Products

1. Compare similar products

Compare "like-for-like". For instance, compare a brand of milk to another brand of milk. Do not compare milk with ice-cream, cheese or yoghurt although they are made from milk.

2. Compare the same nutrients

For higher fibre bread, compare the fibre content in one brand to that in another brand of bread.

3. Compare the same portion

Serving sizes recommended by manufacturers may vary. Take care to compare the same portion. One way is to compare the nutrient values listed under the "per 100g" category in the NIP.

4. Focus on a few key nutrients

Focus on a few key nutrients when selecting your food or beverage to help you make better choices.

- Weight conscious individuals may wish to focus on serving size, energy and fat content of all the foods. The serving size helps you decide how much to consume while the energy and fat content helps you select a lower calorie product.
- The amount of whole grains in foods may also play a role in weight management. Consumers can identify products with high whole grain content by looking for the "Higher in Whole-Grains" Healthier Choice Symbol on food packages.
- For healthier liquid milks, compare the fat and calcium content of similar products. Alternatively, pick products with the Healthier Choice Symbol as these are lower in fat and higher in calcium as compared to regular liquid milks.
- Individuals with diabetes may wish to pay more attention to the calorie, carbohydrate and fibre values as these nutrients have a greater effect on blood sugar levels.
- Individuals with hypertension should pay attention to the sodium content.

Reading Nutrient and Health Claims

How do I read nutrient and health claims?

Many products carry nutrient content claims like "low in fat" or "high in fibre". These claims may sometimes make it easier for us to make a selection. However, they can sometimes be confusing too. Consumers should read the NIP for further information.

For example, a product that has 'reduced fat' is not necessarily a product that is low in fat. It may just have a lower fat content when compared to similar products from other brands.

Nutrient Content Claims on food products must meet the guidelines set by the Health Promotion Board (HPB) and the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA). Consumers should refer to the NIP for the exact amount of fat.



Here are some of the guidelines that must be met to make the following Nutrient Content Claims.

Calorie Free	
\leq 1kcal per 100g or 100ml, o)
≤ 5kcal per serving	

Low Fat ≤ 3g fat per 100g ≤ 1.5g fat per 100ml

Low Sodium ≤ 120mg sodium per 100g

High in Dietary Fibre

 \geq 4g per serving \geq 3g per 100kcal \geq 6g per 100g \geq 6g per 100ml

Low Calorie

≤ 8kcal per 100ml for ready to drink beverages
 ≤ 20kcal per 100ml for other liquid food
 < 40kcal per serving
 OR

≤ 40kcal per 100g

Sugar Free

 \leq 0.5g sugars per 100g or 100ml

Low Cholesterol

- < 20mg cholesterol per 100g and
- ≤ 1.5g saturated fat per 100g and
- \leq 10% of kilocalories from saturated fat and trans fat OR
- \leq 10mg cholesterol per 100ml and
- \leq 0.75g saturated fat per 100ml and
- \leq 10% of kilocalories from saturated fat and trans fat

High Calcium

The Reference Quantity of the food should contain at least 50% of the Recommended Daily Allowance for calcium (see Appendix D for Recommended Daily Allowance for Vitamins and Minerals).

For more information on Nutrient Content Claims, visit: www.hpb.gov.sg

Nutrient Function and Health Claims

Food products cannot claim to prevent, alleviate or cure any disease or condition affecting the human body. Neither can they claim to improve physical health.

However, food products can carry nutrient function claims, which describe the role of the nutrient in the maintenance of growth, development and normal functions of the body. The Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority reviews and approve these claims for use on food based on established scientific evidence.

Some examples of approve nutrient-function claims in Singapore include the following:

Protein provides essential amino acids needed to aid in the building and maintenance of body tissues.

Vitamin B6 is important for the production of energy.

Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth.

Vitamin D3 supports calcium absorption.

Iron is an important component of red blood cells and helps carry oxygen to all parts of the body.

Vitamin C enhances absorption of iron from non-meat products.

You may see other approved claims on food products in the AVA website.

In Summary

- All products containing nutrient and health claims must include the NIP.
- Check for the value of the nutrients in the NIP.
- Always read or verify nutrient and health claims with the NIP.

Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS)

What is the HCS logo and how do products marked with it differ from others?

Products with the HCS logo are lower in fat, saturated fat, sugar and sodium. Some are also higher in whole-grains, dietary fibre and calcium compared to similar products within the same food category.

Making Healthy Choices Easy Choices

You can use the HCS logo on food labels as a guide to identify healthier food and beverage products.

Healthier Choice Symbol Programme

This programme is administered by the HPB. To display the HCS logo, food products must meet the nutritional standards set by the HPB.

There are now ten HCS logo variants:



For more details, visit HPB's website at www.hpb.gov.sg/foodforhealth

Frequently Asked Questions

How accurate is the nutrition information on a food label?

All manufacturers are responsible for sending their food products for analysis at a certified laboratory. AVA monitors the information printed on the food labels to ensure that they are truthful and accurate. Minor variations are permitted to allow for deviations that occur naturally in foods during processing, storage and transportation. Companies that do not adhere to the standards required by laws that govern food labels will be taken to task by the AVA.

Is trans fat required to be included in the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP)?

It is mandatory for all retail prepacked fats and oil to carry information on trans fat content under the NIP. It is also required for HCS product to carry information on trans fat content under the NIP. For other food products, the trans fat content may be voluntarily declared under the NIP.



Frequently Asked Questions (Continued)

Why do some products list "trans fat" on the NIP despite having a "trans fat free" claim on their label?

Food products with insignificant amount of trans fat (less than 0.5g trans fat per 100g) are allowed to be labelled as "trans fat free". As there could still be traces of trans fat, the actual trans fat must not be rounded off to zero, so that consumers are fully aware of the trans fat content of these food.

Why do some plant-based oils state they are cholesterol free? Do plant oils contain cholesterol?

All plant oils, including coconut and palm oil, are naturally free of cholesterol. Cholesterol is found only in animal foods or foods made using animal-based ingredients. Hence, to include the term "cholesterol free" on the label of an oil extracted from plants is not really meaningful, but it reassures shoppers.

For answers to more Frequently Asked Questions about Food Labelling, visit HPB's website at www.hpb.gov.sg Common Ingredient Names

Fats and Oils	Sugars	Low Calorie Sweeteners	Salt and Ingredients Containing Sodium
Vegetable oil or fat	Cane sugar	Aspartame	Salt
Hydrogenated vegetable oil or fat	White sugar	Saccharin	Rock salt
Butter	Brown sugar	Acesulfame K	Sea salt
Margarine*	Raw sugar	Stevia	Vegetable salts*
Coconut	lcing sugar		Chicken powder
Coconut oil	Honey		Soya sauce*
Palm oil	Molasses		Oyster sauce*
Cream	Corn syrup		Monosodium glutamate
Sour cream	Golden syrup		Sodium inosinate
Dripping	Maple syrup		Sodium guanylate
Lard	Glucose		Baking powder*
	Sucrose		Baking soda
	Fructose		Sodium nitrate
	Maltose		
	Lactose		
	Sorbitol		
	Mannitol		
	Xylitol		

APPENDIX B

Addressing Common Food Concerns Using the Ingredient List -

Food Additives

Food additives extend the shelf life of food products, as well as improve their colour, texture and flavour. Such additives include natural extracts that are manufactured or obtained from plants or animals.

In Singapore, additives approved for use in food have been established to be safe. They can only be used as specified under the Food Regulations.

Allergy Alert

Food labels are very important for people with allergies or food intolerances. Some food ingredients can cause allergic reactions which can vary from mild to severe.

Common foods that may cause allergies and intolerances include:

- Peanuts
- Fish
- EggsSova beans

- Other nutsSeafood
- Milk

Gluten

Wheat

Food Preferences

Many individuals do not consume certain food ingredients for various reasons ranging from social and personal preferences to religious reasons.

Individuals with specific food preferences can select foods with more assurance by referring to the ingredient lists.



APPENDIX C

Guide on Recommended Dietary Allowances (For Adults and Children)

Age Group (Older	Ene	ergy^	Protein	Total Fat Limit	Saturated Fat Limit	Carbohy- drate	Dietary Fibre	Sodium Limit
Children)	kcal	kJ	g	g	g	mg	g	mg
				Bo	ys			
7 yrs	1600	6720	39	53	18	241	16	2000
8 yrs	1740	7308	39	58	19	266	17	2000
9 yrs	1940	8148	39	65	22	301	19	2000
10 yrs	2110	8862	49	70	23	320	21	2000
11 yrs	2280	9576	49	76	25	350	23	2000
12 yrs	2530	10626	61	84	28	382	25	2000
13 yrs	2740	11508	61	91	30	419	27	2000
14 yrs	2920	12264	74	97	32	437	29	2000
15 yrs	3030	12726	74	101	34	456	30	2000
16 yrs	3120	13104	80	104	35	466	31	2000
17 yrs	3180	13356	80	106	35	477	32	2000
				Gir	ls			
7 yrs	1500	6300	39	50	17	224	15	2000
8 yrs	1620	6804	39	54	18	245	16	2000
9 yrs	1760	7392	39	59	20	269	18	2000
10 yrs	1910	8022	51	64	21	283	19	2000
11 yrs	2070	8694	51	69	23	311	21	2000
12 yrs	2230	9366	63	74	25	327	22	2000
13 yrs	2310	9702	63	77	26	341	23	2000
14 yrs	2360	9912	66	79	26	347	24	2000
15 yrs	2390	10038	66	80	27	352	24	2000
16 yrs	2400	10080	60	80	27	360	24	2000
17 yrs	2400	10080	60	80	27	360	24	2000

Recommended Dietary Allowances For Children*

Energy values are based on moderate physical activity level. Please refer to http://www.hpb.gov.sg to find out the Recommended Dietary Allowances for light physical activity and vigorous physical activity energy values and to find out your calories needed for the day using the calorie calculator.

Age Group	Ene	rgy^	Protein	Total Fat Ilmit	Saturated Fat Limit	Carbohydrate	Dietary Fibre	Sodium Limit
(Adult)	kcal	kJ	g	g	g	g	g	mg
				Men				
18-<30 yrs	2700	11340	76.3	90	30	396	27	2000
30-<60 yrs	2590	10878	76.3	86	29	377	26	2000
60 yrs and above	2235	9387	76.3	75	25	315	22	2000
				Wome	en			
18-<30 yrs	2070	8694	62.6	69	23	300	21	2000
30-<60 yrs	2035	8547	62.6	68	23	294	20	2000
60 yrs and above	1865	7833	62.6	62	21	264	19	2000
Pregnancy – 2nd trimester	+370	1554	+9	+ 12	+ 4	+ 56	+ 4	-
Pregnancy – 3rd trimester	+480	2016	+9	+ 16	+ 5	+ 72	+ 5	-
Lactation - 1st 6 mths	+500	2100	+25	+ 17	+ 6	+ 75	+ 5	-
Lactation - After 6 mths	+500	2100	+19	+ 17	+ 6	+ 75	+ 5	-

Recommended Dietary Allowances For Adult*

Recommended Daily Caloric Intake for light physical activity (18 - 60 years old) is 2200kcal for men, and 1800kcal for women.

Energy values are based on moderate physical activity level. Please refer to http://www.hpb.gov.sg to find out the Recommended Dietary Allowances for light physical activity and vigorous physical activity energy values and to find out your calories needed for the day using the calorie calculator.

APPENDIX D

Daily allowances and Reference Quantities for Labelling Purposes

Recommended dietary allowances for normal healthy persons in Singapore (adults)

TABLE I VITAMINS AND MINERALS							
Substances	To be calculated as	Daily Allowance					
Vitamin A, vitamin A alcohol and esters, carotenes	Micrograms of retinol activity	750 mcg					
Vitamin B1, aneurine, thiamine, thiamine hydrochloride, thiamine mononitrate	Milligrams of thiamine	1 mg					
Vitamin B2, riboflavin	Milligrams of riboflavin	1.5 mg					
Vitamin B6, pyridoxine, pyridoxal, pyridoxamine	Milligrams of pyridoxamine	2.0 mg					
Vitamin B12, cobalamin, cyanocobalamin	Micrograms of cyanocobalamin	2.0 mcg					
Folic acid, folate	Micrograms of folic acid	200 mcg					
Niacine, niacinamide, nicotinic acid, nicotinamide	Milligrams of niacin	16 mg					
Vitamin C, ascorbic acid	Milligrams of ascorbic acid	30 mg					
Vitamin D, vitamin D2, vitamin D3	Micrograms of cholecalciferol	2.5 mcg					
Calcium	Milligrams of calcium	800 mg					
lodine	Micrograms of iodine	100 mcg					
Iron	Milligrams of iron	10 mg					
Phosphorus	Milligrams of phosphorus	800 mg					

Table on Reference Quantities of foods

Food	Reference Quantity
Bread	240 g
Breakfast Cereals	60 g
Extracts of Meat or Vegetables or Yeast	10 g
Fruit and Vegetable Juices	200 ml
Fruit juice concentrates (diluted according to directions on the label)	200 ml
Flavoured cordials or syrups (diluted according to directions on the label)	200 ml
Malted milk powder	30 g
Condensed milk	180 g
Milk powder (full cream or skimmed) and food that do not contain less than 51% of milk powder	60 g
Other concentrated liquid food including powdered beverage not specified above (diluted according to directions on label)	200 ml
Liquid food not specified above	200 ml
Solid food not specified above	120 g



www.ava.gov.sg



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For more information on food labelling, please contact:

General Food Labelling Information

Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority JEM Office Tower, 52 Jurong Gateway Road, #14-01, Singapore 608550 Tel: 6325 7625 Fax: 6220 6068 Email: ava_email@ava.gov.sg

Nutrition Information and Claims/Healthier Choice Symbol

Health Promotion Board No 3 Second Hospital Avenue Singapore 168937 Tel: 6435 3500 Fax: 6438 3848 Email: hpb_mailbox@hpb.gov.sg

All information is correct at the time of revision (October 2015).