

Reading Food Labels

A guide to better choices

How to make better choices when buying store-bought packaged foods.

Look for the stars

- The Health Star Rating is a quick and easy way to compare similar packaged foods, for example breakfast cereals.
- The Health Star Rating system is not intended for fresh unpackaged foods like fruit and vegetables. These foods are recommended to be a main part of family eating.
- The more stars, the healthier the choice.

The Health Star Rating system

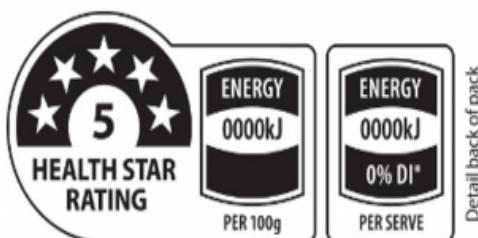
The Health Star Rating system is an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory governments in partnership with industry, public health and consumer groups. It is a voluntary program.

Check the date

- 'Use-by' – food should not be eaten after this date as it may not be safe.
- 'Best-before' – food can be eaten after this date but the quality may not be as good.

The Nutrition Information Panel (NIP)

- Most packaged foods will have a NIP.
- Use the panel to compare similar packaged foods and drinks.
- The panel may have more nutrients listed if the packaged food is making a 'nutrition content claim' for example, "a good source of calcium".



Nutrition Information Panel layout (NIP)

Nutrition Information		
	Per serving	Per 100 g
Energy	467 kJ 122 (cal)	1555 kJ 372 (cal)
Protein	2.6 g	8.6 g
Fat		
- total	0.3 g	1.1 g
- saturated	0.1 g	0.4 g
Carbohydrate		
- total	24.1 g	80.5 g
- sugars	4.1 g	13.7 g
Dietary Fibre	2.8 g	9.4 g
Sodium	2 mg	8 mg

Ingredients: Whole wheat, fruit paste (25%) (dried dates, sultanas, pear juice concentrate, glycerol, blackcurrant juice concentrate), sugar, vitamins (niacin, riboflavin, thiamine).

Ingredients list: Ingredients are listed from most to the least. Use this to check the first three ingredients for items high in saturated fat, salt or sugar.

Total fat: This is the total of all fat including saturated fat. Generally choose packaged foods with less than 10 g per 100 g.

Saturated fat: Aim for the lowest per 100 g. Less than 3 g per 100 g is best.

Dietary fibre: Choose breads and cereals with 3 g or more fibre per serving.

Per serving: This is the suggested serve size. It may not be how much you eat.

Per 100 g: Use the column to compare packaged foods.

Sugar: Aim for the lowest per 100 g. If the sugar content per 100 g is more than 15 g and sugar (or alternate name) is listed high on the ingredient list this may not be the best choice. Sugars are found naturally in ingredients like fruit and milk.

Sodium: Packaged foods with less than 400 mg per 100 g are good, and less than 120 mg per 100 g are better.

The ingredient list

The ingredient list can tell you why a packaged food is high in sugar, salt or fat. Ingredients are listed from most to least in quantity.

If you are watching how much fat, sugar or salt you eat, look for the other names of these ingredients.

FAT	SUGAR	SALT
beef fat	brown sugar	baking powder
coconut	corn syrup	booster
coconut oil	dextrose	celery salt
copha	disaccharides	garlic salt
cream	fructose	meat/yeast extract
dripping	glucose	sodium
lard	golden syrup	monosodium glutamate
mayonnaise	honey	MSG
milk solids	lactose	sodium bicarbonate
nuts	malt	sodium metabisulphite
oil	maltose	rock salt
oven fried/baked	mannitol	sea salt
palm oil	maple syrup	sodium nitrate/nitrite
sour cream	molasses	stock cubes
	monosaccharides	onion salt
	raw sugar	
	sorbitol	
	sucrose	
	xylitol	
	castor sugar	

