



Food Labels

# Tips for reading and understanding food labels

It is always important to know exactly what you are putting into your body. Food labels can help us to make safer and healthier choices!

But reading these labels can sometimes be tricky.

Some food manufacturers use misleading tricks to convince people to buy unhealthy, processed foods. Knowing how to read food labels accurately, will empower you to make good choices and may prevent you from buying unwanted products.

## Ingredient list

Every food label will have a list of ingredients which are listed in order from **highest to lowest**. Rather opt for products with short ingredient lists. This is easier to understand and can be safer for consumption, because a lot of preservatives and chemicals are left out. By learning the buzzwords, you will know exactly what you are eating.

For example: Words ending with -ose, are usually sugar! This includes glucose, fructose, maltose and galactose. Sodium can be listed under salt, brine, monosodium, glutamate and sodium benzoate.

It is much easier to read the ingredients list if you know the disguises!

## Per 100g vs Serving Size

Be vigilant! There are two columns on the food label: per 100g/100ml and per serving size.

**When comparing different products with one another use the 100g information.** The recommended serving size shows us what one portion should be, as eating the whole packet can be too much.

## Energy

The energy intake is the total energy content of the food consumed. The standard measure of energy in South Africa is kilojoules, but some products may contain information in calories.

**Please note kJ and Cal are NOT the same!**

1 Calorie (kCal) = 4.18 Kilojoules! Do not mix these two up!

## Protein

Protein can be found in chicken, eggs, red meat, pork, fish, dairy, grains and legumes. It is an essential ingredient which help us to build muscle. You must try to include only lean proteins in your diet. To determine whether the product is a lean protein, check the fat content. If it is less than 5g fat per 100g, then you are good to go! It is also good to know what a protein portion looks like. One egg contains 7g of protein which equal one protein portion. For more info on this, feel free to contact us! We can help and determine the exact amount of protein your body needs to function optimally.

## Carbohydrates and Sugar

Carbohydrates can include fruit, vegetables, dairy, bread, crackers, cereals and grains. Please be aware: Carbohydrate content on a food label **includes both sugar and starch**. Let's talk about portion sizes. Did you know that 15g of carbohydrates equal one slice of bread! So next time you read your packet of chip's food label, try and break it down into slices of bread. This will put things into perspective!

The amount of sugar indicated refers to the **total amount of sugar** in the product. This **includes sugars naturally** found in fruit and milk **as well as the added sugars**. Every 4g of sugar is equal to 1 level teaspoon of sugar.

**Try to aim for less than 5g of sugar per 100g.**

## Saturated vs Unsaturated Fats

Saturated fats are usually hard at room temperature and can be mostly found in animal products. Although, some plant products can also be classified under saturated fats, like coconut oil! Saturated fats can include butter, cream, visible fat on meat and chicken skin and coconut oil. It is recommended to limit yourself to less than 5% of total energy, this can be **1.5g or less per 100g**.

Unsaturated fats can be classified as healthier fats. This includes poly- and mono-unsaturated fats. Did you know that mono unsaturated fats help reduce cholesterol levels! Every 5g of fat is equal to 1 tsp of olive oil. These fats can include avocado, nuts, nut butters and olive oil, but please keep in mind the portion sizes! When checking a food label, try aiming for **3g of unsaturated fat per 100g**.

## Dietary fibre and Sodium

By looking at the total fibre content, you can get an idea of the quality of the carbohydrates. **Aim for more than 6g/100g of fibre on the food label**. The best fibre options include oats, brown rice, fresh corn, bulgur wheat and quinoa.

**Limit the total sodium intake to 4g of salt (1 teaspoon) per day**. But if you have high blood pressure, try aiming for less! A safe amount of salt is less than 300mg per 100g.

With these simple tips you will be able to make informed, healthier choices!

*Remember: You got to nourish in order to flourish*