



Healthy food and drink choices in schools

GREEN
Fill the
menu



Australian Better Health Initiative: A joint Australian, State and Territory initiative.

AMBER
Select
carefully



Acknowledgement NSW Health

RED
Off the
menu



What's on a label?

There is a lot of information available on food labels today which can be confusing but if you know how to read them, you'll find that the label can be the best source of information about a product. The main focus should be on the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) and the ingredients list.

Nutrition Information Panel (NIP)

The NIP displays the nutrients in a standard format, providing amounts per serve and per 100g (or 100ml if liquid) of the food. It provides information on the amount of energy (kilojoules), protein, total fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars and sodium (salt), as well as any other nutrient about which a claim is made (eg fibre, iron, calcium).

Ingredients list

The ingredients list shows all ingredients in the product, starting with the ingredient present in the largest amount and proceeding down to the ingredient present in the lowest amount. For example, a label that states: Flour, sugar, butter, salt, flavouring; has more flour than any other ingredient.

This information allows you to compare the nutrient content of different serving sizes and to compare the nutrient content of different food products.

Nutrition information and serving sizes

Always check the serving size of the food product. The serve quoted on some food and drink labels may not be the same as the serving size children are actually being given.

The example below shows how to accurately assess the nutrient content of the serving size you are actually providing to children rather than the average serving size stated in the NIP.

EXAMPLE: Baked savoury biscuits

Nutrition information panel

Servings per package: 6		
Average serving size: 16 biscuits (35g)		
	Per serve 16 biscuits (35g)	Per 100g
Energy (kJ)	770kJ	2195kJ
Protein	5.2g	14.8g
Fat-Total	8.8g	25.1g
- Saturated	3.9g	11.1g
Carbohydrate - Total	20.4g	58.1g
- Sugars	1.1g	3.2g
Dietary Fibre	1.4g	4.0g
Sodium	238mg	678mg

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Step 1

Look at the 'per serve' column for the following nutrients:

- Energy (kilojoules)
- Total fat
- Sodium.

Step 2

Determine your serve size:

- You might be providing 24 biscuits as a serve.
- This is one and a half times the serve on the label, ie $16 \times 1.5 = 24$ biscuits

Step 3

Calculate the nutrient amounts in your serving size:

- Energy: $770\text{kJ} \times 1.5 \text{ serves} = 1155\text{kJ}$ as served
- Total fat: $8.8\text{g} \times 1.5 = 13.2\text{g}$ as served
- Sodium: $238\text{mg} \times 1.5 = 357\text{mg}$ as served.

What to look for

In general, you should be looking for foods which are low in fat, sugar and salt. As a quick check:

- ✓ For *savoury foods* you should check the amount of fat and salt and choose the product with the lowest amounts.
- ✓ For *sweet foods* you should check the amount of fat and sugar and choose the product with the lowest amounts.

Fat, sugar and salt are not always represented this way on the ingredients list. These ingredients can masquerade under many different names. For example fat may be listed as butter, oil or monoglycerides, sugar may be listed as glucose, fructose or sucrose, and salt may be listed as sodium or monosodium glutamate.

Sources:

- **Right Bite** *Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for South Australian Schools and Preschools*. South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services and SA Health, 2008.
- *Management \$ense, Food Sense: The essential guide to food services in your school*. The Federation of Canteens in Schools (FOCIS), 1997.

