

Making use of food labels

The labels on food provide us with a large amount of information including best before/use by, storage information, presence of allergens etc. More recently the compulsory inclusion of Nutrition Information Panels on all packaged foods has made choosing healthier foods easier. To illustrate this we have included the Nutrition Information Panels from two food products.

Chocolate Chip Cookie

NUTRITION INFORMATION (average)		
Serving size: 95g (1 biscuit)		
Servings per package: 1		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy (kj)	1880	1960
Protein (g)	5.9	6.2
Fat, Total (g)	21	22.1
- Saturated (g)	11.7	12.3
Carbohydrate, Total (g)	57.8	60.9
- Sugars	35.4	37.3
Sodium (mg)	360	379
Dietary Fibre (g)	0	0

Cereal Bar

NUTRITION INFORMATION (average)		
Serving size: 25g (1 bar)		
Servings per package: 8		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy (kj)	415	1660
Protein (g)	1.6	6.5
Fat, Total (g)	2.7	10.9
- Saturated (g)	2.6	10.5
Carbohydrate, Total (g)	16.3	65
- Sugars	8.4	33.7
Sodium (mg)	39	156
Dietary Fibre (g)	1.3	5.0

- In this example you can see the cookie contains 22.1g of total fat *per 100g* and the cereal bar only 10.9g. They both contain similar amounts of sugar per 100g. The cookie is a much larger serve providing 1880kj while the bar provides only 415kj. The bar also contains some fibre which is good for health. In this example the cereal bar would be a healthier snack lower in fat, kilojoules and higher in fibre.

Consider the following when reading labels:

- The “per 100g” column is a useful one to use when **comparing one product with another similar one** to find the healthier option for your family.
- Fats are listed in two rows, total fat and saturated fat. The **saturated fats are fats from animal sources** that are less healthy so if a product has lots of this then it may not be the best option for health.
- Carbohydrates are divided into total carbohydrate and simple sugars. If most of the carbohydrate in a food is from sugar, it may not be the healthiest option. Dietary fibre is listed separately and we should aim to increase the amount of fibre in our diet.
- Foods with lots of sodium or salt are not healthy and packaged foods are often high in salt. Limit salty foods such as noodles.

Use labels to compare the fat, sugar, fibre and sodium content of similar products to help you select the healthiest option.