

Family Friendly Factsheets!

Food Labelling



When we go shopping we are bombarded with various claims on food labels, but which claims should be on a food label and how do we know what they mean? Food labelling should allow shoppers to know exactly what they are buying and eating. Unfortunately, many shoppers struggle to understand the information provided on food labels. This in turn means that people may think they are eating healthily when, in reality, they are not.

This fact sheet will help you to understand labels more easily and includes information on what various health claims mean. You will then be able to make more informed healthier choices when you shop.

What Should a Food Label Include?

The law states that the following information **MUST** be included on food labels:

- The name or a description of the food
- The name and address of the manufacturer
- The weight and volume of the product. The e next to the weight on some products means the average weight stated on the food must be accurate, but each pack may vary slightly
- Information about processes used in the production of the food such as dried, frozen, pasteurised, smoked or concentrated
- The place of origin should be clearly stated so consumers are not misled by certain foods. For example Yorkshire puddings are not necessarily made in Yorkshire, so the food label must state where they were made
- Any special storage instructions

What Other Information Might Be Included on A Food Label?

Best before date – this date is less to do with safety and is more concerned with quality. When the date runs out it doesn't necessarily mean the food becomes harmful to eat but it may begin to change in flavour or texture. Best

before dates are only applicable though if the food is stored correctly.

Use by date – this date is found on products which are likely to go off quickly such as milk, yoghurt, pre-prepared meals etc. Food should not be eaten after this date as the food may become unsafe to eat.

Ingredients – these are listed in descending order of weight i.e. the most to the least

Vegetarianism – currently there is no legal specification defining 'vegetarian' or 'vegan' but certain requirements have been outlined by the vegetarian society which must be adhered to if a food claims to be suitable for vegetarians or vegans

Nutritional Information – if the food label makes any form of health claim then nutritional information must be included on the label. If nutritional information is on the label the nutrients below must be listed (as a minimum) per 100g or per 100ml:

- Energy (Kcals)
- Fat (g)
- Protein (g)
- Carbohydrate (g)

Should they want to, food manufacturers can include more nutritional information. If however, a food product makes a health claim for a specific nutrient, then the nutritional information for that nutrient must be listed. For example if a food is advertised as low salt, the salt content must be listed within the nutritional information

Health Claims - A health claim states the beneficial effects that a food or its ingredients can have on our body for example helps lower cholesterol, helps aid digestion etc. A health claim must not state that it can treat, prevent or cure any disease or medical conditions

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- **Reduced fat** – not regulated currently by law but guidelines suggest that to make this claim a food must contain 25% less fat than its original full fat counterpart.
- **Low in fat** – not regulated currently by law but should be less than 3% fat (less than 3g of fat per 100g of product)
- **95% Fat free** – misleading as 5% of product is still fat. This by the European law definition is not a low fat food since “low fat” means less than 3% fat.
- **Lite or light?** - There are no laws that say what ‘lite’ or ‘light’ foods are. If a food claims to be light it may not necessarily be low in fat or calories etc

A general rule is to be aware of claims on food labels. Something which claims to be lower in fat may still contain the same number of calories as other similar versions or brands. The best way to decide whether a food is good enough for you is to look at the nutritional information and compare products.

New Food Labelling Legislation

In early 2007 new food labeling regulations are set to be published by the Food Standards Agency which should come into effect 6 months after their publication. PhunkyFoods will be sure to keep you updated as soon as they are published so you can continue to make healthier choices.

How to Choose Healthy Foods for You and Your Family

The following card provides you with a guide to how much fat, salt and sugar is too much or too little when you check food labels. It will help you determine if the health claims made on certain food products are true in what they are saying. You can cut out the card and keep it in your purse/wallet so you’ve always got it handy when you are out shopping. Just make sure that when you’re checking the nutritional information you look at the column which gives the amount of nutrients per 100g and NOT per portion. You can then compare the figure given with the chart below.

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Your Guide to Healthier Choices

	A Lot	A Little
Sodium* /100g	0.5g	0.1g
Salt /100g	1.25g	0.25g
Fat /100g	20g	3g
Saturated Fat /100g	5g	1g
Sugar /100g	10g	2g

* to get total salt content from sodium values multiply by 2.5