



How do I read food labels?

Knowing how to read labels is very important in making the healthier choice when choosing foods. This can be done by reading the ingredients list and looking at the nutritional information table.

Ingredients list



The ingredients are listed in order of **highest quantity to lowest quantity**.



Foods high in sugar, salt or fat usually will have these listed as one of the **first three ingredients**.



Ultra-processed foods often have difficult to pronounce words and even strange numbers (that are usually the additives) in the ingredients list.

Here are some of the common words to look out for:

Sugar: sucrose, glucose, fructose, dextrose, syrup, cane sugar, fruit juice concentrate, honey, maltodextrin, maltose

Salt: sodium, monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium bicarbonate (baking soda), anything with 'sodium', flavour enhancers, soy sauce, brine

Fat: oil, vegetable fat, palm fruit, hydrogenated fat, coconut, cream, lard, shortening, butter, cocoa butter



Remember: Fried ready-to-eat meals and fast foods can be high in trans fats, which are unhealthy.

Nutritional information table

Look at the nutritional information table to find out how much sugar, salt or fat is in a food.

Use the following cut-off points when looking for foods that are lower in saturated fat, total sugar and sodium (salt) and higher in fibre:

Per 100g food or drink (not per serving):	
Total Sugar:	< 5g per 100g food < 2.5 g per 100ml drink
Saturated fat:	< 2.5g per 100g food or drink
Total sodium:	< 120mg per 100g food or drink
Dietary fibre:	>3g per 100g food or drink



Be careful of low-sugar, reduced-fat or other such health claims. Read all the nutrition information and compare with the values as given above. Sometimes the fat is replaced with sugar or vice versa (also not healthy), or it might be high in salt.



Remember: Fresh whole foods that require no food label are better for health.

For more information visit www.nutritionweek.co.za



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