



Nutrition Information Labels

What does it all mean (and why is the writing so darn small)?

Sauce of Truth

Food product manufacturers are required by law to provide accurate nutritional information on packaging.

Food packaging standards are set and regulated by Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ), which is an independent statutory agency operating within the Australian Government Health portfolio.

Nutrition information panels display the total quantity of each macronutrient (i.e. *Protein*, *Fat*, and *Carbohydrate*), with a breakdown of sub nutrients such as *Saturated* and *Trans Fat* (Fat), and *Sugar* (Carb). **NOTE:** the *Sugar* value includes both natural and added or 'free' sugars (4 grams = 1 teaspoon).



The amount of *Sodium* (a component of salt) and *Dietary Fibre* is listed, along with any food additives or nutrients/substances claimed in product promotion (e.g. 'calcium-enriched').

The nutrition panel follows a set format with the quantities of each component *per serve* (portion size) and *per 100g/100mL* (for comparison with similar products). The *ingredients* are listed in descending order of quantity, and the *use/storage instructions* and *country of origin* are shown.

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Typical values	100ml contains	250ml contains	typical adult
Energy	199kJ 47kcal	500kJ 120kcal	8700kJ
Protein	0.5g	1.3g	
Carbohydrate	10.5g	26.3g	
of which sugars	10.5g	26.3g	
	trace	trace	
	trace	tr	

Self-Serving Size

The *Serving Size* is determined by the food product manufacturer.

The stated *Serve* is often difficult to visualize without weighing it, and it may not reflect the portion you actually serve yourself.

The *Serving Size* may also vary between similar products.



Energy Formula

Have you ever wondered how the *Energy* value (kJ/Cal) of a food product is calculated?

All three macronutrients contribute to the potential energy in the product. Each macronutrient has a different 'density' i.e. kilojoules per gram – Protein (17kJ), Fat (37kJ), Carbohydrate (16kJ). NOTE: Manufacturers often use 17kJ per gram for Carbohydrate.

Multiply the total grams of each macronutrient by its density, and then add the three values together.

If *Dietary Fibre* is listed, that will contribute another 8kJ per gram to the *Energy* total.

% Daily Intake

The *Daily Intake* percentage still appears on some packaging. It is based on an adult Estimated Energy Requirement (EER) of 8700kJ.

This information is not useful because each of us has a different EER depending on our age, gender, height, weight, personal activity level (PAL) and health status. Adult EER can vary from 8000kJ to 15,000kJ or more for elite sports people.

The Fine Print

Nutrition information has to compete for space with branding, product/contact information and a myriad other statutory food packaging requirements.

The minimum text size allowed by FSANZ Legibility Requirements for nutrition and health warning information is 3mm.

If the product is classified as 'small', the text can be reduced to 1.5mm, which is very very small!!



Nutrition Information Labels are for the benefit of consumers.

Teach your children how to interpret them so they can make healthy, independent food choices for the rest of their lives.

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