

Resource 5: Reading food labels

Information on food and drink labels can be confusing; however they can be a useful source of information about the nutritional content of a product. They can help you choose healthier food and drink more quickly and easily.

Most packaged foods include the following:

Nutrition Information Panel (NIP):

- Nutrients are displayed in a standard format – per serve and per 100g (or 100ml).
- Provides information on the amount of energy (kilojoules); protein; total fat; saturated fat; carbohydrate; sugars and sodium (salt).
- Can be used to compare similar packaged foods per 100g or per suggested serve.
- Used to work out whether products fit into the **RED** or **AMBER** category.

Ingredients list:

- Lists ingredients from the largest to the smallest by weight.
- Can help identify what is in a product and spot ingredients you may want to avoid e.g fat, sugar or salt.

Health Star Rating (HSR):

- Provides an at-a-glance rating of a food product against a set system, to enable healthier choices to be made when comparing similar food products.
- Provides specific nutrient and energy information.
- The more stars, the healthier the choice, when comparing similar products.
- It is important to remember that the HSR should only be used to compare similar products.

Further information about how to understand food labels can be found at www.eatforhealth.gov.au.

Example: Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) for a muesli bar

Servings per package: 8 Serving size: 31.3g		
	QUANTITY PER SERVING	QUANTITY PER 100g
ENERGY	530kJ (126cal)	1700kJ (405cal)
PROTEIN	1.9g	6.0g
FAT		
- Total	3.7g	11.9g
- Saturated	0.7g	2.2g
CARBOHYDRATE	20.5g	65.5g
- Sugars	7.4g	23.7g
SODIUM	30mg	100mg
FIBRE	1.7g	5.4g
Ingredients: Rolled oats, glucose syrup, sugar, vegetable oil [antioxidants (304, 306)], wheat, rice flour, fruit paste (9%) [dried dates, sultanas, pear juice, invert sugar, humectant (422), wheat fibre, vegetable fat (hydrogenated coconut oil) vegetable gum (pectin), food acid (lactic), flavour], almonds, honey, coconut, oat fibre, maize starch, skim milk powder, emulsifier (soy lecithin), salt, flavour, food acid (malic).		

Example A: Crumbed Chicken Fillet Patty

STEP 1

Identify the correct assessment table. This food belongs in the group *Hot food and other meal items – crumbed and coated foods* and should be assessed against the **RED** criteria in Table 2.

Nutrition Information Panel
for crumbed chicken fillet patty

STEP 2

Hot foods and other meal items are assessed per maximum serve size.

i) Look at the average serving size in the NIP – this is the size which the product is to be sold, i.e. one patty weighs 120 grams.

- average serving size

Servings per package: 60		
Average serving size: 120g		
	Quantity per serve	Quantity per 100g
ENERGY	1176kJ	980kJ
PROTEIN	17.4g	14.5g
FAT		
- Total	15.8g	13.2g
- Saturated	4.1g	3.4g
CARBOHYDRATE		
- Sugars	0.2g	0.2g
SODIUM	734mg	612mg

ii) Compare the average serve size to the maximum serve size specified for crumbed and coated food in the **RED** criteria in Table 2.

Patty fits into AMBER category as its serve size is less than 150g

Category	Nutrient criteria			
Food or drink	Energy (kilojoules) per 100g	Saturated fat (g) per 100g	Sodium (mg) per 100g	Maximum serve size as sold
Crumbed and coated food, frankfurts, and sausages	>1000kJ	>5g	>700mg	>150g

Key: > means more than, < means less than.

STEP 3

Hot foods are also assessed per 100g. Use the *per 100g column* on the NIP.

- per 100g

i) Look at the per 100g column in the NIP for ALL these nutrients:

- Energy (kilojoules)
- Saturated fat
- Sodium

Servings per package: 60 Average serving size: 120g		
	Quantity per serve	Quantity per 100g
ENERGY	1176kJ	980kJ
PROTEIN	17.4g	14.5g
FAT		
- Total	15.8g	13.2g
- Saturated	4.1g	3.4g
CARBOHYDRATE		
- Sugars	0.2g	0.2g
SODIUM	734mg	612mg

ii) Compare the NIP using per 100g column with the **RED** criteria in Table 2. Highlighted text shows the nutrients of interest for the **RED** category.

Remember if any nutrient is greater than the criteria in Table 2 the food is classified in the **RED** category.

Kilojoules are less than the criteria at 980kJ/100g (fits into **AMBER** category)

Saturated fat is less than the criteria at 3.4g/100g (fits into **AMBER** category)

Sodium is less than the criteria at 612mg/100g (fits into **AMBER** category)

Key: > means more than, < means less than.

Category	Nutrient criteria			
	Energy (kilojoules) per 100g	Saturated fat (g) per 100g	Sodium (mg) per 100g	Maximum serve size as sold
Crumbed and coated food, frankfurts, and sausages	>1000kJ	>5g	>700mg	>150g

This crumbed chicken fillet patty is in the **AMBER** food category and should be selected carefully on the menu. That is, don't offer large quantities or promote this food item.

Example B: *Sultana and oat slice (in an individual package)*

STEP 1

Identify the correct assessment table. This food belongs in the group *Cakes, muffins, sweet tarts, slices and pastries – Sultana and oat slice* and should be assessed against the **RED** criteria in Table 4.

STEP 2

Cakes, muffins, sweet tarts, slices and pastries are assessed *per serve as sold*. Look at the serve size as sold.

This slice is pre-packaged with a total weight of 120 grams. This is two times the serve on the label i.e. 60g x 2 = 120g

- serve size as sold is 120g

Servings per package: 2 Average serving size: 60g		
	Quantity per serve	Quantity per 100g
ENERGY	1068kJ	1780kJ
PROTEIN	8.0g	13.3g
FAT		
- Total	11.3g	18.8g
- Saturated	8.0g	13.3g
CARBOHYDRATE		
- Sugars	15.7g	26.2g
SODIUM	102mg	170mg
FIBRE	4.45g	7.4g

STEP 3

Cakes, muffins, sweet tarts, slices and pastries are assessed *per serve as sold and per 100g*.

i) Look at the 'Quantity per serve' column for ALL these nutrients:

- Energy (kilojoules)
- Saturated fat
- Fibre

Nutrition Information Panel for sultana and oat slice

Servings per package: 2 Average serving size: 60g		
	Quantity per serve	Quantity per 100g
ENERGY	1068kJ	1780kJ
PROTEIN	8.0g	13.3g
FAT		
- Total	11.3g	18.8g
- Saturated	8.0g	13.3g
CARBOHYDRATE		
- Sugars	15.7g	26.2g
SODIUM	102mg	170mg
FIBRE	4.45g	7.4g

STEP 4

ii) The serve size sold is 120g, this is two times the average serving size listed in the NIP. Values in the *per serve* column will need to be doubled to determine the total amount of these nutrients provided by the size sold (i.e. 120g slice).

- Energy: 1068 kilojoules x 2 = **2136 kilojoules per serve sold**
- Saturated Fat: 8.0g x 2 = **16.0g per serve sold**
- Fibre: 4.45g x 2 = **8.9g per serve sold**

Nutrition Information Panel for sultana and oat slice

Servings per package: 2 Average serving size: 60g		
	Quantity per serve	Quantity per 100g
ENERGY	1068kJ	1780kJ
PROTEIN	8.0g	13.3g
FAT		
- Total	11.3g	18.8g
- Saturated	8.0g	13.3g
CARBOHYDRATE	31.9g	53.1g
- Sugars	15.7g	26.2g
SODIUM	102mg	170mg
FIBRE	4.45g	7.4g

iii) Compare the adjusted *per serve* values against the **RED** criteria in Table 4.

Kilojoules are over the set criteria at 2136kJ per serve sold (fits into RED category)

Saturated fat is over the set criteria at 16g fat per serve sold (fits into RED category)

Fibre meets criteria with 8.9g fibre per serve sold (fits into AMBER category)

Category	Nutrient Criteria			
	Energy (kilojoules) per serve	Energy (kilojoules) per 100g	Saturated Fat (g) per serve	Fibre (g) per serve
Cakes, muffins, sweet tarts, slices and pastries	>600kJ	> 1200kJ	>3g	<1.5g

STEP 5

i) Now look at the 'per 100g' column for these nutrients:

- Energy (kilojoules)

Remember if the energy per 100g is greater than the criteria on the **RED** criteria Table 4 it is then classified in the **RED** category.

Nutrition Information Panel for sultana and oat slice

Servings per package: 2 Average serving size: 60g		
	Quantity per serve	Quantity per 100g
ENERGY	1068kJ	1780kJ
PROTEIN	8.0g	13.3g
FAT		
- Total	11.3g	18.8g
- Saturated	8.0g	13.3g
CARBOHYDRATE		
- Sugars	31.9g 15.7g	53.1g 26.2g
SODIUM	102mg	170mg
FIBRE	4.45g	7.4g

ii) Compare the NIP per 100g with the **RED** criteria in Table 4.

- Energy: **1780 kilojoules per 100g**

Kilojoules are over the set criteria at 1780kJ/100g (fits into RED category)

Category	Nutrient Criteria			
	Energy (kilojoules) per serve	Energy (kilojoules) per 100g	Saturated Fat (g) per serve	Fibre (g) per serve
Cakes, muffins, sweet tarts, slices and pastries	>600kJ	> 1200kJ	>3g	<1.5g

Key: > means more than, < means less than.

This slice does not meet three of the four criteria for the serve size sold so this slice is in the **RED** category and should be limited for sale.