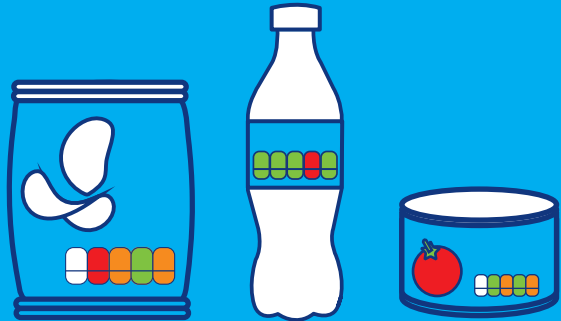


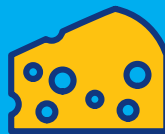
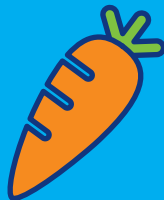
# Food labels made easy



## Food labels made easy

**Healthy eating is important for everyone, whether you've got diabetes or not. That means eating more wholegrains, beans, peas, lentils, dhal, nuts, fish, fruit and vegetables, and choosing foods lower in fat (especially saturated fat), salt and sugar.**

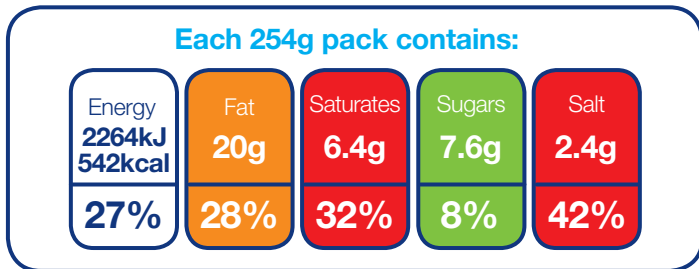
If you do have diabetes, eating the right things (and the right amounts) will help you manage it. And being able to figure out food labels will make it easier. But they can be confusing, so this booklet will help you understand what to look out for. So, next time you're at the shops, you'll know exactly what you're putting in your basket.



## Traffic light labels

Food companies don't have to put labels on the front of their packaging. If they do, they use what are called traffic light labels. These tell you whether the product has low, medium or high amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt. They're designed to let you know at a glance how healthy or unhealthy something is and make it easy to compare similar products.

### Example of a front of pack label



## Green

**means low and a healthier choice.**

These foods are low in fat, saturated fat, sugars and salts. Usually, the healthier the food, the more greens on the label.

## Amber

**means medium.** It's OK to have these foods some of the time.

## Red

**means high.** Most people like food with lots of red. But try to eat them only occasionally and in small quantities.

**Most foods will have a mix of traffic light colours.  
Pick items with more greens and ambers, and fewer reds.**

## Top tips for going green

- 1 Choose semi-skimmed milk instead of full fat.
- 2 Pick low-salt options if they're available.
- 3 Be aware that low-fat products, like yogurts, are sometimes high in sugar to make up for the lack of fat.



The table below shows what value of fats, sugars and salts are considered low, medium or high in a food product. Lower values apply for drinks and larger portion sizes of food.

All measures per 100g	Low	Medium	High
<b>Fat</b>	3g or less	More than 3g to 17.5g	More than 17.5g
<b>Saturated fat</b>	1.5g or less	More than 1.5g to 5g	More than 5g
<b>Sugars</b>	5g or less	More than 5g to 22.5g	More than 22.5g
<b>Salt</b>	0.3g or less	More than 0.3g to 1.5g	More than 1.5g

The numbers for sugars don't tell you whether the sugars are natural, like in fruit, or added by the food company when the product is being made, like sucrose. You can find out more about different sugars on pages 7 & 8.

## Reference Intakes

**Reference Intakes, sometimes shortened to RI, can also be found on the front or the back of the packaging.**

There are recommended amounts for how much sugar, salt, fat and saturated fat everyone should eat and drink each day. A Reference Intake label tells you the percentage that item of food will contribute to these daily targets.

In our example on page 3, the salt content of that product is 42 per cent of your Reference Intake, or how much salt you should be having a day. That's very high.

Nutrition values	per 100g
Energy	1225
Energy kcal	290
Fat	4.6g
of which saturates	2.1g
Carbohydrates	53.4g
of which sugars	2.4g
Fibre	2.7g
Protein	7.4g
Salt	0.75g

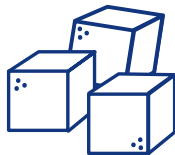
**Of course, everyone is different but you should aim not to eat or drink more than the Reference Intake for fat, saturates, sugar and salt each day.**

## Carbohydrates

**The number for carbohydrate you find on a label includes the carbohydrate from starchy foods like bread, potatoes, rice, pasta, chapattis, fruit, some dairy products, sugar and other sweet foods and drink.**

The 'of which sugars' amount tells you how much sugar the food or drink contains. It includes sugar that's naturally present like fructose (found in fruit) and lactose (found in dairy products), and sugar added by the food company like sucrose.

Sugar added to food can appear in the ingredients list as sucrose, fructose, glucose, syrup or honey.

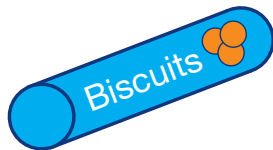


All carbohydrates increase your blood sugar levels.

If you're carb counting, count the 'total carbohydrate' amount, rather than 'of which sugars'.

You'll find the total carbohydrate information on labels at the back of the pack.

To see if something is high in free sugar, also called added sugar, check out the ingredients list as this always starts with the largest ingredient first.



**Artificial or low-calorie sweeteners can be a useful alternative to sugar.**





## Energy

**This is the amount of calories that a food or drink provides.**

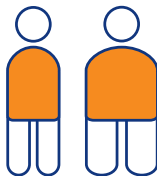


To gain weight you'll need to eat and drink more calories than you use.

If you want to stay the same weight you'll need to balance the calories you use with the calories you get from your food and drink.



**If you want to lose weight you need to eat and drink fewer calories than you use. This might mean you need to move more so you're increasing the amount of calories you are using.**



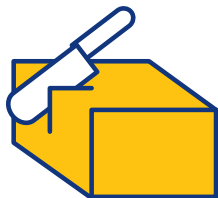
## Fat

**Cut down on fats, especially saturated fats, as they're linked to high cholesterol which can lead to heart disease and stroke.**

Use unsaturated fats and oils, like olive oil, as they're better for your heart.

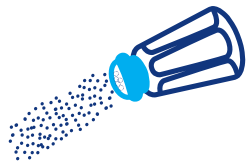
Low fat means a food product has 3g of fat or less in every 100g.

**Reduced fat means the product is at least 30 per cent lower in fat compared to a standard product. But watch out as it still might be high in fat.**



# Salt

**Salt is sometimes listed as sodium or sodium chloride.**



It's the sodium in salt that's bad for your health. Too much salt can cause high blood pressure, which increases your risk of heart disease and stroke.

About 75 per cent of the salt we consume is from pre-prepared foods, like ready meals. Using the traffic light labels to pick green or amber products will help you avoid too much salt.



**You can reduce the amount you use in your cooking by using spices and herbs to season your food instead of salt.**

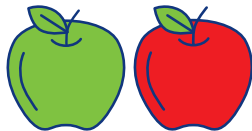
## Fibre

**Fibre is the part of plant food that our body can't completely break down.**

**Soluble fibre** can help control your blood sugar and cholesterol levels. It's found in wholegrain foods, pulses, oats, fruit and vegetables.

**Insoluble fibre** keeps your digestive system healthy. It's found in high-fibre cereals and breads, fruit and vegetables.

**Wholegrains, beans, peas, lentils, dhal, fruits and vegetables have a good mixture of soluble and insoluble fibre.**





**If you want loads more great hints and tips about eating well visit our Enjoy Food website.**

Along with real-life stories, how-to guides and the latest foodie trends, it's packed with simple, great-tasting healthy recipes to inspire you in the kitchen.

**[diabetes.org.uk/enjoyfood](https://diabetes.org.uk/enjoyfood)**

# Top tips for understanding food labels

- 1 Labels on the front of the packaging can help you spot whether a product contains lots of fats, sugars and salt or just a little.



- 2 Use the 'per 100g' column on the back label to compare what's in similar food. You can also use this to check against your actual serving size.

Nutrition values	per 100g
Energy	1225
Energy kcal	290
Fat	4.6g
of which saturates	2.1g
Carbohydrates	53.4g
of which sugars	2.4g
Fibre	2.7g
Protein	7.4g
Salt	0.75g



- 3 The 'per serving' column might also be on the back. Use this if you want to know the amount of fats, sugar and salt in the suggested portion.

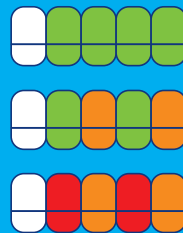
Nutrition values	per serving
Energy	784
Energy kcal	186
Fat	2.9g
of which saturates	1.3g
Carbohydrates	34.2
of which sugars	1.5g
Fibre	1.7g
Protein	4.7g
Salt	0.48g



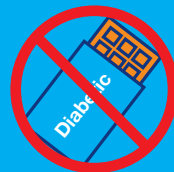
**4** Always check what the food company suggests is a portion size, as it might be different from what you think or normally eat.



**5** Remember you don't need to avoid all food and drink which contains a lot of fats, sugars or salt. If an item has lots of reds on the front of the packaging only eat them occasionally and in small amounts. Try to pick items with lots of greens and sometimes ambers. It's the overall balance of your diet that counts.



**6** One label to always avoid is any food products marked 'diabetic'. Despite their name, these products don't offer any special benefit for people with diabetes.



## How you can get more help

You can get dietary advice especially for you. Everyone with diabetes is able to see a registered dietitian on the NHS. Just ask your doctor, nurse or diabetes team to refer you.



## Diabetes UK Helpline

Our specially trained counsellors can help you understand more about your diabetes. They can give you practical advice, help you solve everyday problems or just be there for you when you're having a difficult time.



**0345 123 2399\***

**helpline@diabetes.org.uk**

Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm

\*Calls may be recorded for quality and training purposes.

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