

Australian Healthy Shopping Guide **Buyers Guide**

Understanding Nutrient and Health Claims

Food labelling laws are governed by the food standards code, which is administrated by the Australia New Zealand Health Authority (ANZFA). These laws are in place, in an effort to reduce the number of misleading nutrient and health claims on food labels.

Nutrient claims often promote foods as being 'healthy' however, they may not be always what you actually think. An example is the claim "Light" or "Lite".

This label doesn't necessarily mean that the product is low in fat or kilojoules. "Light" could refer to the texture, colour or taste of the product or may also refer to the sugar or salt content.

The characteristic being lightened must be stated on the label. For example:

- Light potato crisps are thinly sliced and lightly salted (but may still have as much fat as normal crisps and as many kilojoules in a packet)
- Light beer is low in alcohol
- Light olive oil is light in flavour and colour (its usually less than 15% virgin olive oil) but contains the same fat and kilojoules as other oils.
- Light cheese has less fat and salt
- Light margarine (spread) has less fat

Hence you must not rely on only the claim on the label to select your food.

In the **“The Healthy Shopping Guide”**, you can learn more about what other claims on labels really mean.

Nutrient and Health Claims covered in this book include:

- Reduced fat
- Light or lite
- Low fat or low in fat
- % fat free
- No added sugar
- Sugar free
- All natural

- Toasted or oven baked
- Salt reduced
- Low salt
- Pick the tick
- Carbohydrate modified
- Diet, low joule or low calorie
- Cholesterol free
- Cooked in vegetable oil

Nutrition Information panel

Reading and understanding labels can be confusing, but if you want to look for healthy food choices and compare products it is essential. Understanding the meaning of the nutrition information panel (and the ingredients list) on food packages takes confusion out of making the best choices when shopping.

The nutrition information panel must appear on pre-packaged products greater than 10cm². The nutrition information panel gives details of the energy (that is kilojoules or calories), protein, fat, carbohydrate (this includes total carbohydrate and sugar as separate entities), sodium, potassium, total fat (this includes total fat and saturated fat as separate entities), and other relevant nutrients such as specific vitamins, minerals, fibre etc. If a health or nutrient claim appears on the label or a food is a good source of a nutrient, then it may appear on the label, eg calcium, folate or fibre.

To learn more about:

- Using the Nutrition Information Panel
- Deciding what is suitable and what is not suitable
- How much fat, sugar, sodium (salt) and fibre you should be aiming for with the products you buy, consult the 'Healthy Shopping Guide.'

About Ingredients Lists

An ingredient list is required by law, to be on all food packages. By looking at the ingredients list you will get a wealth of facts about how healthy a product is and whether it is suitable or not.

The ingredients listed must be in order of quantity with ingredients used in the greatest amount listed first and the ingredients used in the smallest amount at the end of the list.

If a type of fat such as animal fat, vegetable oil etc, or a type of sugar such as corn syrup or sucrose etc, appears as one of the first three ingredients on the list, then the product is most likely to be high in fat, or sugar, or both.

Also note that all fats are high in calories whether saturated, polysaturated or monounsaturated.

When looking at ingredients on a food product, be aware of added fat, sugar and salt and look for products higher in fibre.

Beware when it comes to looking for fat, sugar and salt, as they may appear by different names. They may be listed in their various “forms” low on the list to reflect a smaller quantity.

For example: other common names for 'fat' include:

- Beef fat
- Beef tallow
- Animal or vegetable oil
- Animal, vegetable or butter fat
- Shortening
- Milk
- Solids
- Copha
- Lard
- Coconut oil
- Cream
- Dripping
- Palm oil
- Toasted

To learn more about other common names for sugar and salt, see the Australian Healthy Shopping Guide

How Dietitians from the 'Healthy Shopping Guide' choose products

We understand that not all people want to have time to, or can analyse products and learn how to choose the healthiest products for their needs. Because of this, we have taken the hard work out of analysing products and done it for you.

Many of the patients and clients of Caron Milham and Associates, Dietitians, have found this service and this information very helpful and as a result of this, we have wanted to make this information more widely available.

A healthy eating plan should include a wide variety of foods that are low in fat (particularly saturated fat), sugar, salt, high in fibre and nutrients.

We analyse different food categories for different things. Overall, we are looking at the best options within each food category, from a 'health' point of view.

We focus on choosing the products with the most favourable combination of the following nutritional criteria:

- Lower Fat (particularly saturated fat) - aim for less than 10% fat with saturated fat less than 1/3 of total fat.
- Lower sugar (i.e. added sugars – not natural sugars found in fruit or milk) - aim for less than 10% added sugars
- Higher fibre - aim at least 8 grams fibre per 100 grams
- Lower salt
- Higher nutrients eg: vitamins, minerals
- Lower kilojoules

For example, looking at 'fat'.....

Fat - even though generally we aim for <10% fat.....

For some food categories we aim for less than 3% fat. This is because either 1) These food groups are naturally low in fat eg: breads, cereals, pasta, fruit, vegetables, grains and most beans or 2) There are lots of options within a particular food category that can offer products at this level. For example, pasta sauces, salad dressings, yoghurt, ice cream, milk, crispbreads and soups, are some food products that have had lower 'fat' alternatives developed.

Then for others, we might aim for less than 16%fat eg: low sugar, high fibre muesli bars with saturated fat less than 1/3 of total fat with nut and seed content making up the majority of the fat.

It is all relative and each category is analysed differently. We are looking at a range of products available in each category and we choose the better options.

We also give extra information and guidance with food choice throughout the book to assist people with Diabetes, High blood pressure, High blood cholesterol, or excessive weight, as well as tips to assist in planning nutritionally balanced meals.

Food Categories covered

This book covers many popular food categories, such as those listed below.

Food categories in this book include:

- Breads
- Rice and Pasta
- Other grains

- Savoury biscuits and crispbreads
- Breakfast cereals
- Muesli bars, breakfast bars, muffin bars
- Meat –including cold cuts
- Chicken – including cold cuts
- Fish and seafood- canned, with biscuits, fish-based stir in sauces
- Dairy foods- Milk, cheese, yoghurt, ice cream
- Fats and oils
- Convenience and frozen meals- chicken, fish, pasta and noodle dinners, complete meals, accompaniments
- Stir Fry sauces and recipe bases
- Curry pastes
- Pasta sauces
- Legumes
- Fruit
- Vegetables
- Juices