



# Food and drink labelling:

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A tool to encourage  
healthier eating

Food and Drink  
Federation



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Delivering Sustainable Growth

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**“Seeing the energy, fat, sugars and salt in a food at a glance can help patients check and compare similar products and choose those with lower energy or less fat. The more they compare products the more they become aware of what’s in the food they’re eating.”**

**Nigel Denby**

Registered Dietitian and Head of Nutrition at [www.grub4life.com](http://www.grub4life.com)

## Changes to labelling on products sold in the UK

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**Labels on pre-packaged food and drinks have changed due to a new European Regulation<sup>1</sup>. This new piece of legislation is designed to make food labelling easier for people to use.**

Since the legislation came into force on 13 December 2014 most labels have already changed, but it takes time to change every label over so for a while you may see both old and new style labels in the shops.

Food labelling is a useful tool which informs people about their food choices. Although this legislation has resulted in changes to the labels of nearly every food and drink product on sale in Europe, people need not be intimidated or put off by these changes. With this guide we aim to de-mystify some of the changes that have been introduced under this legislation; in doing so we hope to equip individuals with the information they need to adapt to the new food labels and use them with confidence.



**Barbara Gallani**, Director of Regulation, Science and Health at the Food and Drink Federation

1. The regulation's full name is the 'EU Regulation 1169/2011 on the provision of food information to consumers'

# Food and drink labelling as a tool for healthy eating

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**At [www.grub4life.com](http://www.grub4life.com), an online community for nutrition in early years, we know some people find food labels confusing, however they needn't be. We are delighted that FDF has produced this resource to help explain nutrition labelling.**

Seeing the energy, fat, sugars and salt in a food at a glance can help patients check and compare similar products and choose those with lower energy or less fat. The more they compare products the more they become aware of what's in the food they're eating.

The label can also help clearly show patients the difference that portion size can make. Think about asking someone to compare the different energy and nutrient levels between different sizes of snacks, like chocolate or crisps, before making their choice. Or ask patients to consider the impact of eating one, two or three sausages before they start cooking their evening meal. Just making someone stop and think before they buy or cook can really help impact on their dietary choice.

Advising patients to use the labels can also help them decide when they are happy to be indulgent. For instance, they might choose to save their favourite full fat mayonnaise to have with prawns, but use a low fat mayo in sandwiches or coleslaw. Then again, they could also use labels to keep a tally of their fat intake over a day or a week - this might help them decide if they can afford to be indulgent at all!

On top of this, labelling provides other essential information, such as any allergens contained within a product, which is need-to-know information for all of those who suffer from allergies (as well as their families and friends). I hope that you find this guide useful in your work as a healthcare professional and it helps you to help your patients understand food labels.



**Nigel Denby** Registered Dietitian  
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## Reference Intakes (previously Guideline Daily Amounts)

The term 'Guideline Daily Amount' (GDA) has been replaced with 'Reference Intake' (RI) however the principles behind how these values are determined remains the same.

This is the first time that the actual values have been set out in European Law. RIs are given for all of the mandatory nutrients (below). However, unlike with GDAs where values existed for men, women and children, for simplicity there is now only one set of RIs (below).

### TIP

*The reference intakes for fat, saturates, sugars and salt are all maximums and not targets to aim for.*

### Reference Intakes for energy and selected nutrients (adults)

Energy or nutrient	Reference Intake
Energy	8400kJ / 2000kcal
Total fat	70g
Saturates	20g
Carbohydrate	260g
Sugars	90g
Protein	50g
Salt	6g

Although the RI values are for an 'adult', they are actually based on the requirements for an average female with no special dietary requirements and an assumed energy intake of 2000 kcal.

### TIP

*Although there were previously child GDAs, Reference Intakes for children do not exist under the new legislation.*

**IMPORTANT.** This information is a guide only and is not individual advice.

## Nutrition information on the front of pack

Although labels have changed, most packaged food and drink products will continue to show simple nutrition information on the front of pack which is provided voluntarily by manufacturers.

### TIP

*It will always be in this order so, for example, if a patient is watching their salt intake, this will always be the last number.*

### TIP

*By checking the portion information a individual can keep track of what they eat.*

Front of pack nutrition labels will show either:

**Energy**

or

**Energy | Fat | Saturates | Sugars | Salt**

An example label:

Each slice of bread (40g) contains:

Energy 397kJ 94 kcal	Fat <b>0.9g</b>	Saturates <b>0.2g</b>	Sugars <b>1.4g</b>	Salt <b>0.4g</b>
5%	1%	1%	2%	7%

of an adult's Reference Intake.

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: Energy 993kJ/235kcal

All of this information will be provided in grams (g) apart from energy which now appears in 'kilojoules' (kJ) and 'kilocalories' (kcal).

This information will also normally be provided as a percentage of the Reference Intake, the new term for Guideline Daily Amount.

Normally the nutrition information on a label will be given in a portion or unit and this will be shown immediately next to the label e.g. 'per 1/2 of a pizza' or 'per slice'.

**IMPORTANT.** People often use 'calories' and 'energy' interchangeably. If an individual is watching their calorie intake, it is important to look for the number in the energy icon that is followed by kcal.

# Using front of pack labels to check, compare and choose

## TIP

Compare similar foods, such as the shepherd's pie and lasagne below, to see how the nutrient content of the similar products differs.

The front of pack label allows individuals to:

- **Check** what their food contains - how much energy and how many grams of fat, saturates, sugars and salt plus how much of their Reference Intakes this contributes to
- **Compare** foods they buy with other similar foods
- **Choose** the foods that best suit their needs

The label also allows people to:

- Keep an eye on portion size
- Focus on the nutrients that are important to them
- See how individual foods fit into a balanced diet

## IMPORTANT.

Getting into the habit of using the front of pack label to check the content of foods on a regular basis can make individuals more conscious of what they are eating.

### Example labels:

#### Shepherd's Pie (per pack)

Energy 1931kJ 461 kcal	Fat 19g	Saturates 10g	Sugars 2.1g	Salt 2.3g
23%	27%	50%	2%	38%

of an adult's Reference Intake.

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: Energy 455kJ/109kcal

#### Lasagne (per pack)

Energy 2549kJ 609 kcal	Fat 32g	Saturates 16g	Sugars 9.7g	Salt 1.6g
30%	46%	80%	11%	27%

of an adult's Reference Intake.

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: Energy 655kJ/157kcal

## TIP

It's a good idea to think about what else is eaten at mealtimes and what effect that may have. For example, if a lasagne is bought is that eaten with garlic bread, salad or oven chips? And what about dessert?

## Variations on front of pack labels

Now that the basic elements of a label on the front of pack are set down in European law there is greater consistency in what will be seen on pack, no matter what the individual brand or which supermarket someone shops in.

As well as the information already covered in the previous pages, some labels will have a traffic light colour (red, amber and/or green) overlaid on top of the nutrition information, along with the Reference Intake information. The colour coding is a UK-wide government scheme and provides an indication of whether there is a high, medium or low amount of the nutrient per 100 grams.

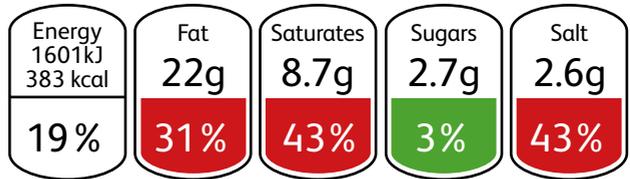
**IMPORTANT.** Sometimes products may have a similar colour code but still have different nutrition information. The detailed RI information can help individuals choose between products that have the same colour. See the example below which shows how the RIs can help choose between two similar pizzas.

### TIP

Front of pack labelling can help inform choices by giving information about some nutrients. However, it cannot be a substitute for advice on how someone can achieve a healthy and balanced diet, which might include, for example, recommendations to increase certain foods like fruit and vegetables and oily fish, or nutrients like fibre.

#### Example labels:

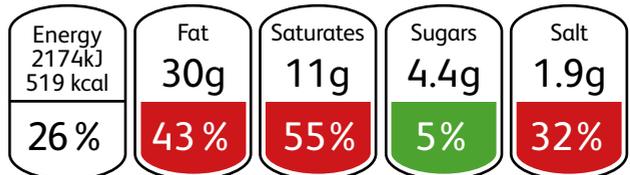
##### Pepperoni pizza 1 (per ½ pizza)



of an adult's Reference Intake.

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: Energy 1322kJ/316kcal

##### Pepperoni pizza 2 (per ½ pizza)



of an adult's Reference Intake.

Typical values (as sold) per 100g: Energy 1229kJ/294kcal

## Mandatory nutrition labelling

**It is now mandatory for food and drink manufacturers to provide nutrition information on almost all food and drink<sup>1</sup>; you'll usually find this on the back of product packaging.**

Nutrients will have to be listed in a certain order – energy (both in kilojoules and kilocalories) and the amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrates, sugars, protein and salt (in place of 'sodium' which is no longer permitted).

The information has to be given per 100g/ml but can additionally be given:

- Per portion or per consumption unit (e.g. per slice)
- As % Reference Intakes (formerly known as Guideline Daily Amounts)

Information on the following nutrients can be provided in a voluntary basis: mono and poly-unsaturates, polyols, starch and fibre. Information on certain vitamins and minerals can be given if listed on an approved list and present in significant amounts.<sup>2</sup>

### TIP

*Salt now has to be listed on pack instead of sodium. This change makes it easier for individuals requiring a diet lower in salt to choose between products on shelf.*

**IMPORTANT.** If a nutrition claim is made then it becomes mandatory to give information about that nutrient, even if it is not listed in the regulation. For example if the claim 'high in omega 3' was made then the amount of omega 3 per 100g would have to be given.

<sup>1</sup> Exemptions from mandatory labelling are listed in Annex V of the Regulation

<sup>2</sup> Approved vitamins and minerals are listed in Annex XIII of the Regulation

# Ingredients list

**All of the ingredients of a product are listed in descending order of weight in an ingredients list.**

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The amount of the ingredients used in a product will also be stated where:

- (i) The ingredient (e.g. steak and kidney pie) or category of ingredients (e.g. vegetable pasty) appears in the name of the food.
- (ii) It is usually associated with that name by the consumer e.g. lamb in a shepherd's pie.
- (iii) It is emphasised on the labelling in words, pictures or graphics e.g. strawberry in a yogurt described as having 'chunks of real strawberry'.
- (iv) The ingredient is essential to characterise a food.

The ingredients list can also help if someone wants to look for, or avoid, a certain ingredient. For example:

- 1) Vegetable oils and fats can be grouped together in the ingredients list under the term 'vegetable oils' or 'vegetable fats' but this must be followed by the type of vegetable origin (e.g. palm, sunflower or rapeseed) and the phrase 'in varying proportions'.
- 2) If 'hydrogenated oil' is included in the product, it must be described as either 'fully hydrogenated' or 'partially hydrogenated'. It is partially hydrogenated oil that contains artificial trans fatty acids not fully hydrogenated oil.

## TIP

*If an individual is allergic to or intolerant of an ingredient/s, they can refer to the ingredients list to see exactly what a product contains. (See the next page for further information on allergen labelling)*

**IMPORTANT. If it's not listed on the ingredients list, it's not in the product.**

## Allergen information

### Fourteen major food allergens must be emphasised in the ingredients list.

These are: cereals containing gluten, crustaceans (e.g. prawns or crab), molluscs (e.g. clams or mussels), eggs, fish, peanuts, nuts, soybeans, milk, celery, mustard, sesame, lupin and sulphur dioxide.

Where the allergen is not obvious from the name of the ingredient, there will be a clear reference to the name of the allergen next to the ingredient e.g. 'casein' (milk) or 'tofu' (soya).

Food businesses can choose the method of emphasis that they would like to use, for example, **bold**, *italics*, highlighting, contrasting colours, CAPITALISING TEXT and underlining.

An allergy advice statement may also be used to direct consumers to the ingredients list for allergen information.

INGREDIENTS
Water, Carrots, Onions, Red Lentils (4.5%) Potatoes, Cauliflower, Leeks, Peas, Cornflower, <b>Wheat</b> flour, Cream ( <b>milk</b> ), Yeast Extract, Concentrated Tomato Paste, Garlic, Sugar, <b>Celery</b> Seed, Sunflower Oil, Herb and Spice, White Pepper, Parsley
ALLERGY ADVICE
For allergens, see ingredients in <b>bold</b>

**IMPORTANT.** Always check the ingredients list for allergen information.

- **Use of statements such as 'Contains: milk, nuts' to summarise allergen ingredient information will no longer be allowed**

The only exception to this is for products that do not have an ingredients list, such as wine where a 'contains: sulphites' may be used.

- **No more references to gluten**

Consumers will instead need to look for the cereals containing gluten, such as wheat, rye and barley, which will be emphasised in the ingredients list.

### TIP

*Always check for 'may contain' warnings.*

*Information on the potential risk of cross contamination with other allergens will be provided in the same manner as it is now. These warnings should always be taken seriously.*

## Why nutrition and health claims can be trusted

**A nutrition claim is any claim which states, suggests or implies that a food or drink has particular beneficial nutritional properties. These are set out in European legislation and are scientifically substantiated allowing people to have full trust in their legitimacy<sup>1</sup>.**

Food and drink manufacturers can only make nutrition claims if they are from the approved list and meet the conditions around their usage (e.g. a minimum level of that nutrient within the final product).<sup>2</sup>

Examples of approved nutrition claims include:



### TIP

*If someone is trying to improve one aspect of their diet, nutrition or health claims can make it easier for them to spot appropriate products, e.g. finding a bread that is high in fibre. The nutrition label will give them information on other nutrients.*

**A health claim is a statement about the positive effect a product can have on health. Claims which appear on pack have been approved by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), the EU risk assessment body for food safety.<sup>3</sup>**

An EFSA approved list of health claims has been published by the European Commission; any additions to this list must undergo a thorough approval process including the submission of a scientific dossier to EFSA for review.

Examples of approved health claims include:

- Beta-glucans contribute to the maintenance of normal blood cholesterol levels
- Calcium is needed for the maintenance of normal bones
- Folate contributes to maternal tissue growth during pregnancy
- Iron contributes to the reduction of tiredness and fatigue

<sup>1</sup> This piece of legislation is called 'Regulation (EC) 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims' made on foods.

<sup>2</sup> The most up to date list of permitted nutrition claims can be found within the EU Register of nutrition claims (accessible via the web link on the following page).

<sup>3</sup> An authorised list of health claims has been published in the Register by the EU. The only non-authorised health claims remaining on the market are botanical claims and claims for which additional data is currently being assessed.

**IMPORTANT. Nutrition and health claims are based on science and can be trusted.**

## Further resources

### FOR INDIVIDUALS:

- **NHS Choices 'livewell' pages** providing wide ranging information including on healthy diets, fitness and losing weight  
[www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/Pages/Livewellhub.aspx)
- **British Nutrition Foundation** advice pages on all aspects of nutrition including healthy eating tips  
[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)
- **Food Standards Agency leaflet:** 'Buying food when you have a food allergy or food intolerance'  
<http://www.food.gov.uk/multimedia/pdfs/publication/allergy-leaflet.pdf>

### FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS/BUSINESSES:

- **Government advice** on healthy eating and the Eatwell plate  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-plate-how-to-use-it-in-promotional-material/](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-eatwell-plate-how-to-use-it-in-promotional-material/)
- **FDF's Workplace Wellbeing toolkit** offering employers tips and guidance to enhance their workplace health programmes  
[www.fdf.org.uk/workplace\\_wellbeing\\_toolkit.aspx](http://www.fdf.org.uk/workplace_wellbeing_toolkit.aspx)
- **The list of authorised nutrition and health claims** can be found within the EU register:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/nuhclaims/>
- **Department of Health technical guidance** on creating a front of pack label provides advice aimed at food businesses, which includes the detailed nutrition criteria underpinning the red, amber and green colour coding.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/207588/FINAL\\_VERSION\\_OF\\_THE\\_2013\\_FOP\\_GUIDANCE\\_-\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207588/FINAL_VERSION_OF_THE_2013_FOP_GUIDANCE_-_WEB.pdf)
- **British Retail Consortium guidance** on communicating nutrition labelling changes to consumers, aimed at food businesses  
[http://www.brc.org.uk/downloads/Nutrition%20Labelling%20\(Communication%20to%20Consumers\).pdf](http://www.brc.org.uk/downloads/Nutrition%20Labelling%20(Communication%20to%20Consumers).pdf)

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**Barbara Gallani**

Director of Regulation, Science and Health at the Food and Drink Federation

# About FDF

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The Food and Drink Federation is the voice of UK food and drink, the largest manufacturing sector in the country. Our sector directly employs up to 400,000 people and accounts for around 16% of the UK's total manufacturing sector by value.

Our membership comprises food and drink producers of all sizes as well as trade associations dealing with specific sectors of the industry. In representing the interests of our members, we focus on the following core priorities:

- **Food Safety and Science**
  - **Health and Wellbeing**
  - **Sustainability**
  - **Competitiveness**
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