

## Understanding food labels

Food labels contain so much information, it's often difficult to know what you should be looking for and what it means. If you want to improve your diet and make sure that you're eating healthily, it's crucial that you take the time to check the nutritional information on the packaging.

### What should I look for in the nutritional information?

Remember: to keep your diet healthy you are looking for foods low in salt and saturated fat. The table below shows the information you should look at per 100g – aim to choose foods with measurements in the low bracket.

In addition to traffic light colours you will also see the number of grams of fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt in what the manufacturer or retailer suggests as a 'serving' of the food.

| All Measures per 100g | LOW<br>– a healthier choice | MEDIUM<br>– ok most of the time | HIGH<br>– just occasionally |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Sugars</b>         | 5g or less                  | 5.1g - 15g                      | More than 15g               |
| <b>Fat</b>            | 3g or less                  | 3.1g - 20g                      | More than 20g               |
| <b>Saturates</b>      | 1.5g or less                | 1.6g - 5.0g                     | More than 5g                |
| <b>Salt</b>           | 0.3g or less                | 0.31g - 1.5g                    | More than 1.5g              |

So, if you see a red light on the front of the pack, you know the food is high in something we should be trying to cut down on. It's fine to have the food occasionally, or as a treat, but try to keep an eye on how often you choose these foods, or try eating them in smaller amounts.

If you see amber, you know the food isn't high or low in the nutrient, so this is an OK choice most of the time, but you might want to go for green for that nutrient some of the time.

Green means the food is low in that nutrient.  
The more green lights, the healthier the choice.

Many of the foods with traffic light colours that you see in the shops will have a mixture of red, amber and greens. So, when you're choosing between similar products, try to go for more greens and ambers, and fewer reds, if you want to make the healthier choice.

The traffic light colours will make it easier for you to compare products at-a-glance. The label also tells you how much of each nutrient is in a portion, so if two labels have similar colours you can compare these figures, and choose the one that is lower to make a healthier choice.

One retailer that has grasped the importance of this concept is Sainsbury who have marked many of their own label ranges with the Traffic Light System example as shown.

As people who wish to make a difference to our Health by the products we buy, and coupled with the BHF guide this should help us to make the healthier choice.

**And remember its all about getting the overall balance of our diet and lifestyle right.**

