Label Reading Made Easy

Label reading can be quite confusing. Packaging can show a variety of information and claims. There are a couple of key things to look for on any packaging:

1. **Product Claims**

There are often different claims shown on packaging such as ‘reduced fat’ or ‘low in sugar’, but it is not always clear what they mean. The table below shows some common claims and explains what they mean.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What it says | What it means |
| Fat or sugar free | No fat or sugar in the product |
| Reduced, Light or LITE | At least 30% lower than the standard product |
| No added sugar | No sugar of any type has been added but it may contain naturally occurring sugars |

1. **Front of Pack Nutrition Labels.**

Most manufacturers show a Front of Pack nutrition label on their products. This label is usually based on a traffic light colour system (green, amber and red), although not all labels stick to these colours, which can again make it confusing. The colours and their meaning are explained below:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Per 100g | Low | Medium | High |
| Fat  | Less than 3g | 3 to 17.5g | More than 17.5g |
| Saturated Fat | Less than 1.5g | 1.5 to 5g | More than 5g |
| Sugar | Less than 5g | 5 to 22.5g | More than 22.5g |
| Salt | Less than 0.3g | 0.3 to 1.5g | More than 1.5g |

Red = High and should be kept to a minimum

Amber = Medium so ok most of the time

Green = low so the healthier choice

**Helpful tips for reading food labelling…**

* Check the nutrition label to compare products, helping to make healthier choices.
* Check the portion size on the Front of Pack label – it might be referring to the whole pack or only part of the pack.
* Be aware of the calorie content in each serving.
* Use the above colour guides to help compare products.
* Aim for products which show mostly **greens**, some **oranges**, and only sometimes choose **reds**.
* Ingredients lists are in order of quantity, starting with the ingredient which the product contains most of. Be aware where added sugar sits.
* All added honeys, syrups, nectars, treacle, and caramels count as added sugar as they all have the same effect on the body.
* Other names for added sugars include glucose fructose syrup, molasses, sucrose, fructose, invert sugar, glucose, and dextrose.
* The word **‘flavoured’** means the product is flavoured using the **actual** ingredient, whereas the word **‘flavour’** indicates an artificial flavouring has been used.

