

Making sense of food labels

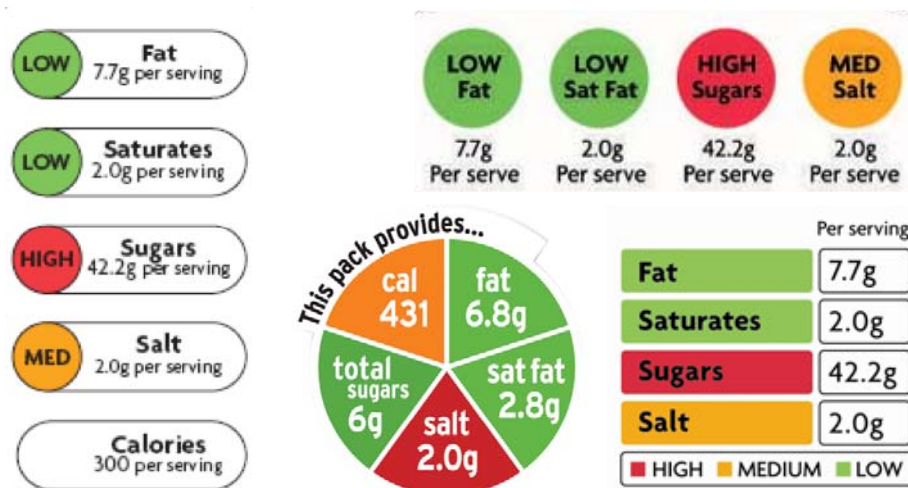
This leaflet is for patients with kidney disease. As part of a healthy, balanced diet, we should all watch our intake of fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar. Eating a lot of foods high in fat, salt and/or sugar over a period of time can be harmful to your health. It can make you overweight and/or raise your blood pressure. Reading food labels can be very useful for making healthy food choices more often – this leaflet explains how you can understand them. If you have any further questions, please contact us using the details on the back page.

Front of pack labelling

Traffic light labelling

- A **red** light means the food is high in something you should be trying to cut down on. It's okay to have the food occasionally as a treat or in small amounts.
- An **amber** light means the food isn't high or low in the nutrient. This is a suitable choice most of the time.
- A **green** light means the food is low in that nutrient. This is a good choice all of the time.

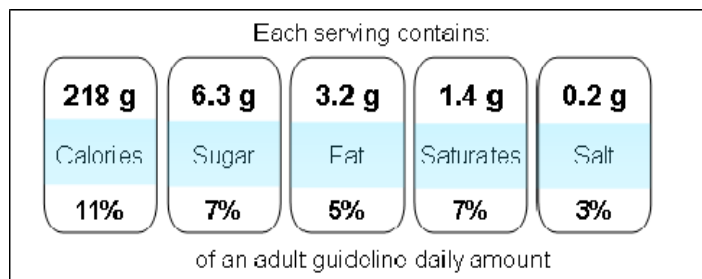
Many of the foods will have a mixture of red, amber and green lights. All foods can be included in moderation as part of a healthy balanced diet but choosing foods with fewer red and more amber and green lights means a healthier choice.



In addition to the traffic light colours, these labels also show you the amount of each nutrient that is present in a portion or serving of the food. Use this information to compare products (for example, sandwiches and ready meals) to help you choose the healthier option. Remember to compare similar portion sizes.

Guideline daily amount (GDA)

The guideline daily amount is the average amount of each nutrient an average adult needs each day. This labelling system gives the amount of calories (energy), fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt **per portion** of the food, and a percentage showing how much this contributes to the 'guideline daily amount'.



Remember to check whether your serving size is larger or smaller than the suggested size.

The GDA system can be used for comparing products such as different types of pizzas, sandwiches or ready meals, but remember to check that the portion sizes of the foods you are comparing are similar.

Different shops and food producers have developed their own versions of the two main front-of-pack labelling systems. Some use traffic light labelling, some use guideline daily amounts and some use a combination of the two. However, the traffic light colours always have the same meaning.

Back of pack labelling

Nutritional information panel

Many foods have a panel on the back of the packet giving the nutritional content of the food. These labels usually give the amount of energy, protein, fat and carbohydrate in 100g of the food. They may also give the amount of sugar, salt and fibre in 100g. Some labels also give the amount of these nutrients per serving. The amount per 100g is useful to compare products, but remember to think about how much of the food (cooked weight) you are eating, or look at the information per serving or portion.

The following table can be used to help you decide if a product is healthy:

	LOW Per 100g	MEDIUM Per 100g	HIGH Per 100g
Fat	3g or less	3.0 – 20g	20g or more
Saturates	1.5g or less	1.5 – 5g	5g or more
Salt	0.3g or less	0.3 – 1.5g	1.5g or more
Sugars	5g or less	5.1 – 15g	15g or more

A copy of this table is printed at the back of this leaflet for you to cut out and keep in your wallet.

Ingredients list

Ingredients, including additives, are listed in descending order of weight at the time they were used to make the food. So the higher up the list an ingredient appears on the list, the more

there is of this ingredient in the food. This is a useful way of checking how much salt or sugar is in a product.

Labelling terms

Sodium - Salt is often labelled as sodium. To convert sodium to salt, multiply the amount of sodium by two and a half. For example: 0.4g sodium x 2.5 = 1g salt. Adults and children over 11 years old should aim to eat less than 6g of salt per day.

No added salt – This means that no extra salt has been added during the cooking process. It does not always mean that the food is low in salt. Check the actual salt content on the nutritional information label.

Reduced salt – These foods contain at least 30 percent less salt than the standard product. Choose reduced salt breads, cereals, baked beans, bacon, gravy and pickles where possible.

No added sugar – This means that no extra sugar has been added as an ingredient. These foods are a healthy choice compared to foods containing added sugar.

Note: You should treat claims such as ‘reduced fat’ or ‘light’ with care. For example, crisps or biscuits may claim to be lower in fat or salt than the standard version, but they may still contain a lot of fat or salt. Yoghurts, biscuits or cakes which claim to be lower in fat may have extra sugar added instead. Remember to check the label for more information.

What if my appetite is poor?

There may be times when your appetite is poor, you are unable to eat as much as usual or you need to put on weight. During this time it is important to eat foods that have more energy. You can use the traffic light labels to pick foods that are higher in fat and/or sugar (red lights) to help you.

What about phosphate and potassium?

Labels do not show the amount of phosphate or potassium found in a food. Your dietitian will talk with you about which foods are high in potassium and phosphate, if necessary.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the nutrition and dietetics department on 020 7188 4128 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm). If we are unable to take your call, please leave us a message and we will call you back.

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You may want to cut out this table and keep it in your wallet to help you decide if a product is healthy.

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Appointments at King's

We have teamed up with King's College Hospital in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find that we invite you for appointments at King's. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Contact us

If you have any questions, please contact the **renal dietitians** on **020 7188 4128** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

If we are unable to take your call, please leave us a message and we will call you back.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future

Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years. To join:

t: 0848 143 4017 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk

w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk

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