

Label Lingo - Beware!

Nutritional claims – what do they mean?

'No Added Sugar'

A product will have no **extra** sugar 'added', e.g. sugar (sucrose), honey, glucose but many foods that have this claim are high in 'natural' sugar.

They can be lower in total carbohydrate and kilojoules/calories than standard products but can still be high in total carbohydrate and kilojoules/calories.

Examples:

- Fruit canned in natural juice
 - Fruit juice - no added sugar
 - Creamed corn - no added sugar
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'Sugar Free'

These products contain no sugar. Sweetness is usually from artificial sweeteners and or sugar alcohols, e.g. sorbitol or xylitol. They may provide smaller amounts of carbohydrate but could still affect blood glucose control.

The total fat and kilojoule/calorie content may be high. 'Regular' products can be suitable and cheaper.

Sugar free does not mean 'carbohydrate' free or that you can eat these freely!

Examples

- 'Sugar Free' biscuits/chocolates
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'Diet' or 'Low Joule'

Products low in kilojoules/calories are often sweetened with artificial sweeteners or a very small amount of sugar and artificial sweetener.

It is still important to double check the carbohydrate and kilojoule/calorie content.

Examples:

- Weight Watchers jelly – artificial sweetener
 - 'Diet' Ginger beer – artificial sweetener and a small amount of sugar added
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Weight Watchers

Products are often low in fat and have less kilojoules/calories but are not necessarily low in sugar and carbohydrate.

A 'Weight Watchers' label does not mean that you can eat more!

Examples

- Muesli bars – total carbohydrate may be similar to standard products
 - Biscuits – high in sugar; may be a smaller sized biscuit than standard products
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Low GI (Glycaemic Index)

A low GI value does not always indicate that a food is an everyday healthy food choice. It may still be high in sugar, carbohydrate, fat and/or kilojoules/calories. Look for the certified GI logo.



Examples:

- Chocolate – sugar free, low GI but high in fat
 - Nutella – low GI but high in fat and sugar
 - Christmas Pudding – low GI but high in sugar, carbohydrate and kilojoules/calories
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'Lite' or 'Light'

A product may have less energy, fat, sugar and or salt but 'lite' or 'light' may just refer to the colour.

Examples:

- 'Lite' Olive oil – a lighter colour and blander taste
 - 'Lite' yoghurt – may be low in sugar or fat but not both
 - 'Lite' Peanut butter – lower in fat than regular peanut butter.
 - Just Juice Bubbles Lite – less sugar, but still high in sugar
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Low Fat

These products are low in fat but the fat may be replaced with a high kilojoule/calorie ingredient e.g. sugar to keep the taste palatable.

It is a good idea to compare a low fat product with a standard product.

Examples:

- Low fat muesli and low fat ice cream – may be high in sugar
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Fat Reduced

The fat content is less than the 'regular' product but they are not necessarily low in fat or kilojoules/calories.

Examples:

- Potato chips, reduced fat, 85% less saturated fat – A quarter (25%) of the product is fat
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98% Fat Free

Products will contain only a little fat (2%) but the sodium (salt) and sugar content may be high. They still contain carbohydrate and kilojoules/calories.

Examples:

- Crackers – often high in salt
 - Noodles – low in fat but still high in carbohydrate
 - Licorice – high in sugar
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Cholesterol Free

Foods will be low in cholesterol and saturated fat but not necessarily low in total fat and or carbohydrate. Cholesterol is not found in plant-derived foods.

Examples:

- Olive oil – high in total fat, (90%); high in kilojoules/calories
 - Basmati rice – rice would never have cholesterol in it.
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Pick the Tick

These foods have met the NZ Heart Foundation criteria for being lower in saturated fat and salt. But these products could be high in kilojoules/calories. However they may not be low in total fat, sugar and/or kilojoules/calories. Many foods without the label may still be healthy food choices.

Check the labels, especially sweeter foods. Savoury foods may often be more suitable.

Examples:

- Olive oil – low in saturated fat, high in kilojoules/calories
 - 'Light n' Tasty' breakfast cereal – low in fat but high in sugar
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'No Added Salt' or 'Salt Reduced'

This can mean that no salt is 'added' or the salt content reduced compared to the 'original' product.

Examples:

- Peanut butter – 'no added' salt
 - Baked beans, salt reduced – lower in salt than the original product
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Health Star Ratings

- Health Star Ratings are a *voluntary* front-of pack labelling system for packaged foods. It provides a quick easy way for shoppers to compare similar packaged foods and choose the healthier option.
- Health Stars rate the nutrition content of packaged food using a scale of half a star to 5 stars.
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- Foods lower in saturated fat, sugar or sodium, and/or higher in fibre, protein, nut, legumes, fruit or vegetable content will have more stars.
- For more information about Health Star Ratings on MPI's website www.mpi.govt.nz/healthstars



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