

# Understanding food packaging labels



By [Amanda Rogaly](#)

14 Feb 2014

While a small number of people do more than glance at labels on foods, many will not understand fully what they are reading. Once consumers understand what they are reading, they can make better choices and have better conversations with their GPs and medical specialists about what they should be eating.

Some components that must be looked at include sugar, protein, trans fat and total fat. However, what is also important to understand is that products that say they have no fat, really mean that the content is below the minimum requirement for disclosure.

First, look at the size of a single serving and how many servings the package has. This could also save money if one product will give you more bang for your buck with smaller servings that contain more of the recommended daily allowances.

Work out how many nutrients you are getting per serving and then consider how many servings of that product you usually take in. This sounds daunting but can be easily worked out with a measuring jug and a calculator.

Then, chat with your health professional to determine how much of each nutrient you should be taking in every day. This will help you to eliminate food that is doing you more harm than good.

Reading labels is especially important for people with heart issues, high cholesterol or diabetes and the more you read, the easier it becomes. Generally, recommendations readily available indicate that total fat should be limited to between 56 to 78 grams a day, which includes no more than 16 grams of saturated fat, under two grams of trans fat and less than three mg of cholesterol for a 2000 calorie diet.

Good nutrients include fibre, calcium, and vitamins, so make sure you take in all of what you need every day. Limit sodium (salt), sugar and fat intake as much as possible and compare labels of similar products to do so.

In addition, just because a label does not list an ingredient, it does not mean it is not present in another form. For example, a label on the front may say the product has no added MSG, but all that means is that none has been added, while some may have been in the raw ingredients to start with.

Do not take at face value what you see on a label. Delve a bit deeper in order to understand exactly what you are eating. The SureMark is the easiest way to see that the product is honest in its claims.

## ABOUT AMANDA ROGALY

A seasoned and award winning entrepreneur who is currently the CEO and Founder of the largest and fastest growing parenting platforms in South Africa. Amanda is passionate about empowering parents, leveraging her own parenting journey to educate others and influence purchasing decisions. Amanda is an aggressive brand builder and is passionate about strategically growing brands to increase top and bottom-line results and has combined her communications excellence with FMCG brands.

- Understanding food packaging labels - 14 Feb 2014
- Understanding food labelling - 7 Nov 2013
- Aiding SA's economy - 20 Sep 2013

[View my profile and articles...](#)