The Nutrition Label

From all my years working with children and having three children of my own, I know how hard it can be trying to find the right foods to feed our children a healthy snack.

Below is a nutrition label that I will help you decipher just to make the task at hand a little easier to understand.

What the information on this package tells us:

Nutrition Information

There are five bars (totalling five serves), in this pack, each weighing 35 grams.

Average Quantity per serving relates to ‘a serve’

Average Quantity per 100g relates to enable you to compare an equal weight of this product to other products similar to this.

Some sugars are naturally forming in fruit and vegetables and should not be avoided, however excluding products with large numbers of added sugars is the key. If sugar content is greater than 15g per 100 grams check the ingredient list for added sugars.

This muesli bar contains 3.1 grams of dietary fibre, this equates to the same amount of fibre you would find in 2 serves of wholegrain bread.

This muesli bar is Gluten free and contains sulphite free fruit. Sulphites are used as a preservative however they have been linked to food intolerance symptoms such as headaches.

Nuts (peanuts, almonds and cashews are the major ingredient being listed first, followed by seeds, dried fruit and sugars. Natural vanilla flavour is artificial flavouring that has been added to this product.

Alternative names for sugars:
Dextrose, fructose, glucose, golden syrup, honey, maple syrup, sucrose, maltose, lactose, brown sugar, castor sugar, raw sugar, agave, rice malt syrup.

This muesli bar contains 712 kilojoules (or divide by 4.2 to obtain calories) /170 calories. It also provides 5.2 grams of protein, 10 grams of Fat (of which 1.2 grams is saturated) and 12.8 grams of Carbohydrate (of which 8 grams are sugars, (divide by 4 grams to get one teaspoon of sugar). When subtracting 8.0 grams sugars from 12.8 grams Carbohydrate 4.8 grams is coming from Nuts, Seeds, Flour, Rice bran and Psyllium husks. The sugars are Cranberries, sugar, glucose, Honey, Rice syrup and Apple.

The numbers in the per 100g column represent percentages. For example 36.5g of Carbohydrate means that this bar contains 36.5% of carbohydrate.

Packaged foods low in salt are those less than 120mg of sodium in 100grams of food.

This muesli bar provides 3 milligrams of sodium.
**Recommended number of serves for Boys and Girls aged 1-8 years:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetables &amp; legumes/beans</th>
<th>Fruit</th>
<th>Grain (cereal) foods, mostly wholegrain</th>
<th>Meats, fish, eggs, nut and seeds and legumes/beans</th>
<th>Milk, yoghurt, cheese, and alternatives</th>
<th>Discretionary choices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>2-3 serves</td>
<td>½ serve</td>
<td>4 serves</td>
<td>1 serve</td>
<td>1 to 1.5 serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 years</td>
<td>2.5 serves</td>
<td>1 serve</td>
<td>4 serves</td>
<td>1 serve</td>
<td>1.5 serve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8 years</td>
<td>4.5 serves</td>
<td>1.5 serve</td>
<td>4 serves</td>
<td>1.5 serves</td>
<td>2 serves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is a serve?

To find out what is in a serve have a look at the following webpage provided by The Australian Government.

**Ideas for School lunch boxes:**

When deciding what to place in your child’s lunch box it is always handy to think of the food groups that are mentioned above.

- One serve of grains/ cereal foods would be 1 slice of bread, or ½ cup of cooked rice or pasta. Having a sandwich in your child’s lunch box provides 2 serves of grains.
- 1 apple or 1 banana (provides one serve of fruit) whereas 1 mandarin and ½ cup of strawberries also provides 1 serve of fruit.

**Quick Tip: Including a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables provides a wide range of vitamins and minerals that our body requires. Try adding different fruits and vegetables in your child’s lunch box every day.**

**Ideas for School lunch boxes: Continue**

- Avocado is a great spread for sandwiches, so too is hummus. Tzatziki and hummus can also be used as a dip for carrot, capsicum and celery sticks.
- ½ cup of Corn Kernels in a nude food container or corn on the cob is great as a snack and provides one serve of vegetables
- ½ cup of snack tomatoes also provide 1 serve.
Quick tip: Did you know many children prefer raw vegetables to cooked ones. Try offering your child raw vegetables.

If they do not like them, try offering it again at a later date. It is said that a child has to be offered something at least 15 times before they decide they actually like it.

- Cold pasta salads, potato salads and rice salads are great for school lunch boxes, especially when they have vegetables and fruit added to them, for example apple pieces in a rice salad. These foods when served cold also act as a probiotic for beneficial gut health.
- Baked beans, boiled egg, sliced cheese, mixed lettuce, shredded carrot, cucumber, and tomato make great sandwich fillers. If your school permits nut butters, such as peanut butter this is also great as it provides added protein. Cold shredded chicken breast is also a good source of protein that can be included in sandwiches.
- Yogurts are also great in lunch boxes and 100 grams provides a serve of dairy, however when choosing yogurts refer to the nutritional label and look out for additional sugars that are not necessary.
- Cold deli meats such as ham are Ok in moderation, however do try to limit these as they are considered discretionary foods and are high in sodium.
- Homemade snacks such as biscuits, muffins, cupcakes, cakes, slices are OK on occasion, try limiting to once a week and or to special occasions. If you are pushed for time like many of us are and want to buy packaged treats, take note of the nutritional labels and follow guidelines as listed above.

Quick tips for Fussy eaters:

Children will go through stages of fussiness when it comes to trying new foods or eating existing foods. This behaviour is normal and when it does occur our frustrations should not be shown. Children will eat when they are hungry, unless of course there is an underlying medical condition. Furthermore alternative foods do not need to be offered.

Drinks for lunch boxes

Water should be the main drink of the lunch box to keep hydrated. If you want to offer your child a dairy drink such as milk try to avoid flavoured milks as these can contain as much as 5 teaspoons of sugar in a serving.

Quick tip: A frozen UHT 200ml plain Milk can replace an ice brick in the school lunch box. It not only keeps the lunch cold but also provides a nutritious dairy drink to have with the lunch time meal.
Recipe Ideas: Chickpea fritters with tzatziki

Ingredients:
1 X 400g can chickpeas, rinsed, drained
2 eggs lightly beaten
½ cup milk
¾ cup self-raising flour
1 tsp ground cumin
1 cup fresh corn kernels taken off corn cob (tinned if not in season).
1 onion
2 garlic gloves
2 tbs finely chopped parsley
1 dollop of low fat tzatziki

Method:
• Place chickpeas in a food processor and pulse until coarsely chopped. (If you don’t have a food processor a potato masher will do the job). Add eggs and combine, continuing to add milk, flour and cumin whilst pulsing. Fold in corn kernels, onion, garlic and parsley.
• Lightly coat a frying pan with olive oil/ rice bran oil and heat over medium heat. Spoon ¼ cup of the mixture for each fritter and form 4 fritters in the pan. Cook for 2-3 mins each side until golden, risen and cooked through. Transfer to a warm plate and continue with remaining mixture until all cooked through.
• Serve 3 fritter with tzatziki to a small salad to make a complete meal or have one fritter as a snack in the lunch box.

Written by Nutrition student Theresa Gray studying at Southern Cross University.

References:

