

## Do you know how to food read labels?

One thing that has improved over the last few years is the obligatory food panel found on all commercially produced foods. Labeling about additives, preservatives is another matter.

### Reading the food panel

Learning to read the food panel and ingredients on a particular food, will better equip you for making smart food choices.

### The food panel example

| Nutritional information |                  |              |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| Servings per package    | 4                |              |
| Serving size            | 79g drained mass |              |
|                         | Qty per 79g      | Qty per 100g |
| energy                  | 476Kj            | 603Kj        |
| protein                 | 18.1g            | 22.9g        |
| Fat, total              | 4.5g             | 5.7g         |
| - saturated             | 1.0g             | 1.3g         |
| - trans                 | <0.1g            | <0.1g        |
| - polyunsaturated       | 1.5g             | 1.9g         |
| - omega 3               | 1.2g             | 1.5g         |
| + EPA                   | 455mg            | 575mg        |
| + DHA                   | 570mg            | 725mg        |
| - monounsaturated       | 2.0g             | 2.5g         |
| carbohydrate            | <1.0g            | <1.0g        |
| - sugars                | <1.0g            | <1.0g        |
| sodium                  | 410mg            | 515mg        |
| potassium               | 245mg            | 310mg        |

### Definitions and use

Servings per package: this tells you how many serves are found in each tin/package. In this instance there are 4.

Serving size; this tells you the weight/amount that constitutes a serve. In this case 79g

Qty per serve; a breakdown as it applies to each serve (already defined above)

Qty per 100g: this is the best way to judge foods as 100g is the same as 100%. So protein = 22.8g per 100g means that the products is 22.8% protein.

Energy: this refers to how many kilojoules the food gives you. Sometimes this is written as calories, but the newer measure is kilojoules (approx 4 Kj = 1 calorie)

Protein: how much each serve and 100g contains. Anything over 10g (or 10%) is a good protein source. You should be aiming to have 80-110g of protein per day with zone.

Fats, total: (usually not as well broken down as this label). It is useful to know omega 3 content of foods. Often fish (which in the wild are a great source of omega 3s) have been drained of their omega 3 content (this is how they make fish oil tablets). So if you are having the tinned/package fish for the omega 3 content you need to check this. This particular one is very high in omega 3.

Carbohydrates: this reflects how much of the product is carbohydrate (or sugar). Sometimes products will have their GI (glycaemic Index) shown. This refers to how quickly the carbohydrate in the product is turned into sugar. A high GI (>55) gives sugar very quickly, a lower GI is slower and better.

Sodium; refers to salt content. Daily limits are 2400mg in Australia. If you have kidney disease or high blood pressure you really should try to have less than 1500mg.

Potassium; this label refers to potassium levels. Some labels will refer to magnesium, and other minerals found in the food.

### **Ingredients List**

The ingredient list will tell you all the things used to make the food. This is where preservatives, chemicals, artificial flavors, colours etc. should be declared. Beware though, companies are getting around labeling so that instead of writing "621" they will write monosodium glutamate or flavour enhancer. (This is one potentially lethal additive used to enhance the flavour in food and has been associated with asthma attacks and death).

The ingredients list, names the most dominant food first and in descending order to that used least.

In this example only Pink salmon and salt were used.

If you are in doubt or want to know more about additives the following websites are useful:

FSANZ: [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au)

[www.fedupwithfoodadditives.info](http://www.fedupwithfoodadditives.info)