

Zoom in on saturated fat, sugars and sodium in packaged foods

When you're buying food, it can be tough to know what to look out for. But there are three nutrients to pay close attention to: saturated fat, sugars and sodium are nutrients of public health concern when consumed in excess.

Saturated fats. These are types of fat that are generally solid at room temperature. Consuming too much saturated fat increases the risk of heart disease. Frozen dinners, appetizers, baked goods, snacks and desserts are often high in saturated fat.

Sugars. They can occur naturally or be added to food. Excess consumption of added sugars and sugary drinks is associated with increased risk of cavities, weight gain, obesity and Type 2 diabetes. Sugary drinks, breakfast cereals, baked goods, snacks and desserts are often high in sugars.

Sodium. Sodium is a component of salt, which we add during cooking or at the table to season our foods. However, most of the sodium we consume comes from processed foods, like bread, frozen entrées, soups and processed meats. Too much sodium can lead to high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Many packaged foods contain more saturated fat, sugars or sodium than you think. This is why it's important to read food labels. **What can food labels tell you about these nutrients?** Most packaged foods in Canada have three labelling tools to help you identify what's in your food and make more informed decisions:

- **The new nutrition symbol with the magnifying glass.** Located on the front of packages, this symbol shows if the food is high in one or more of saturated fat, sugars, sodium or any combination of these nutrients.



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- **The nutrition facts table.** Located on the back or side of packages, it shows key nutrients, including saturated fat, sugars and sodium, and how much of each the stated serving of the food contains. The nutrient amounts are shown in grams or milligrams, as well as in per cent daily values. Five per cent or less is a little, 15 per cent or more is a lot.
- **The list of ingredients.** Located on the back or side of packages, it tells you what the food is made of, in decreasing order by weight of the ingredient. The added sugars in a food are grouped together after the word “Sugars.” This grouping helps you see if sugars were added and what their source is.

These labelling tools give you important information on saturated fat, sugars and sodium content of your foods. This way, you can easily compare foods to help you make more informed decisions about what you buy and eat.

Learn more about using labels at canada.ca/nutrition-labelling.

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