

**Turn and look
for healthier food choices**
Want to Learn More?

Check out the following websites:
Centre for Food Safety
www.cfs.gov.hk
Central Health Education Unit,
Department of Health
www.cheu.gov.hk/eng/info/index.htm



A closer look at
Nutrition Labelling

**WEIGHT
MAINTENANCE
AND
ENERGY**



WHAT IS WEIGHT MAINTENANCE?

Weight maintenance is about the balance of energy intake and energy output so that we are neither overweight nor underweight. This will help to keep our body healthy and reduce the risk of developing a number of chronic diseases, such as diabetes and heart diseases.



What is Energy Intake and Energy Output?

Energy intake means the energy we get from eating foods and drinks whereas energy output means the energy required for body functions and physical activities.

In general, energy is mainly from fat, protein and carbohydrates in food.

1 gram of fat
= 9 kilocalories

1 gram of protein
= 4 kilocalories

1 gram of carbohydrates
= 4 kilocalories

1 kilocalorie (kcal) = 1 Calorie
≈ 4.2 kilojoules (kJ)



What are the Guiding Principles for Weight Maintenance?

Metabolism in the body converts fat, protein and carbohydrates into energy. The body burns energy for body functions and physical activities. Any unused energy will be stored as fat in the body. In other words, regardless of whether it is fat, protein or carbohydrates, it will be converted into fat in the body if it is not used.

People often focus on fat intake when thinking about weight reduction or maintenance. In fact, one can decrease the energy intake (i.e. cutting energy intake, not just cutting fat intake) and/or increase the activity levels (e.g. exercise, sports).

How to Maintain a Healthy Body Weight?

For people who are overweight, the first step towards a healthy body weight is to cut down on foods that are high in energy, fat and/or sugars. Fat provides the largest amount of energy amongst all nutrients, cutting one gram of fat intake means subtracting 9 kcal from a diet.

Look for a lower fat version of a food item is a good place to start. Other than fat content, sugars being "empty-calorie" (i.e. providing energy but with no other nutritional value) should be another nutrient that overweight people need to reduce the intake. Apart from cutting down on fat and sugars, they should also keep track of their energy intake. It is thus important to understand information on nutrition labels to help them make healthy food choices.



NUTRITION LABELLING HELPS BEAT THE WEIGHT

Nutrition Information 營養資料	
Per 100g/ 每100克	
Energy/ 能量	398kcal/ 千卡 (1670kJ/ 千焦)
Protein/ 蛋白質	7.5g/ 克
Total fat/ 總脂肪	2.6g/ 克
- Saturated fat/ 飽和脂肪	0.2g/ 克
- Trans fat/ 反式脂肪	0g/ 克
Carbohydrates/ 碳水化合物	86.1g/ 克
- Sugars/ 糖	4.0g/ 克
Sodium/ 鈉	105mg/ 毫克

From 1st July

2010, nutrition labels on prepackaged food will provide the content information of energy, protein, carbohydrates, total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, sodium and sugars.



When reading nutrition labels, attention should be paid to the serving size and the actual amount of food to be consumed. If one eats twice the serving size, the energy and nutrient content will be doubled accordingly.

Nutrition claims on a package are always eye-catching. However, claims on fat and/or sugars may not be a good indicator of the energy content of the product. As weight control is about energy reduction, one should focus more on claims on energy since they give a better idea of the energy content of the products.

Table 1: Specific Conditions for Nutrient Content Claims in Relation to Energy, Fat and Sugars

Claims	Specific conditions	
	Per 100 g of solid food	Per 100 mL of liquid food
Energy		
Low energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 40 kcal (170 kJ) of energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 20 kcal (80 kJ) of energy
Energy free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not applicable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 4 kcal (17 kJ) of energy
Fat		
Low fat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 3 g of fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 1.5 g of fat
Fat free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 0.5 g of fat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 0.5 g of fat
Sugars	Per 100 g of solid food or Per 100 mL of liquid food	
Low sugars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 5 g of sugars 	
Sugars free	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Containing not more than 0.5 g of sugars 	

Regardless of the types of nutrition claim that may appear on the package, they only give a rough idea about the content of a particular nutrient, one should not make a food choice solely on the basis of a nutrition claim. Moreover, very often nutrition claims are made for a specific nutrient only. In order to eat healthily, we should take note of other nutrients as well. For example, a product with a “low sugars” claim may have high fat content. The best practice is to refer to the nutrition label for detailed information.

THREE SIMPLE STEPS TO READ NUTRITION LABEL

STEP

1

TAKE NOTE OF THE REFERENCE AMOUNT OF FOOD BEING USED IN THE NUTRITION LABEL

The nutritional content may be expressed in several ways:

per 100 g/mL

per serving

per package

Comparison should be made basing on the same reference amount, e.g. per 100 g versus per 100 g, per 50-gram serving versus per 50-gram serving, but not per 100 g versus per 50-gram serving.

STEP 2

READ AND COMPARE THE NUTRITIONAL CONTENT

Based on the same reference amount of food, consumers can make comparison among the content of energy, total fat and sugars of various products. Then choose the one that is lower in energy, total fat and sugars.

Question 1: Which is a better choice?

Milk Beverage A:

Nutrition Information 營養資料	
Servings Per Package/ 每包裝所含食用分量數目: 1	
Serving Size/ 食用分量: 236mL / 236毫升	
	Per Package/ 每包裝
Energy/ 能量	156kcal/ 千卡
Protein/ 蛋白質	7.8g/ 克
Total fat/ 總脂肪	9.0g/ 克
- Saturated fat/ 飽和脂肪	5.9g/ 克
- Trans fat/ 反式脂肪	0.2g/ 克
Carbohydrates/ 碳水化合物	11g/ 克
- Sugars/ 糖	11g/ 克
Sodium/ 鈉	97mg/ 毫克



Milk Beverage B:

Nutrition Information 營養資料	
Servings Per Package/ 每包裝所含食用分量數目: 1	
Serving Size/ 食用分量: 236mL / 236毫升	
	Per Package/ 每包裝
Energy/ 能量	84kcal/ 千卡
Protein/ 蛋白質	8.5g/ 克
Total fat/ 總脂肪	0.2g/ 克
- Saturated fat/ 飽和脂肪	0.2g/ 克
- Trans fat/ 反式脂肪	0g/ 克
Carbohydrates/ 碳水化合物	12g/ 克
- Sugars/ 糖	12g/ 克
Sodium/ 鈉	104mg/ 毫克

Answer 1: Milk Beverage B is a better choice as it has much less energy and total fat in each package (i.e. 236 mL).

Question 2: Which is a better choice?



Corn Flakes C:

Nutrition Information 營養資料	
	Per 100g/ 每100克
Energy/ 能量	382kcal/ 千卡
Protein/ 蛋白質	8g/ 克
Total fat/ 總脂肪	0.7g/ 克
- Saturated fat/ 飽和脂肪	0.1g/ 克
- Trans fat/ 反式脂肪	0g/ 克
Carbohydrates/ 碳水化合物	86g/ 克
- Sugars/ 糖	8g/ 克
Sodium/ 鈉	800mg/ 毫克

Corn Flakes D:

Nutrition Information 營養資料	
	Per 100g/ 每100克
Energy/ 能量	400kcal/ 千卡
Protein/ 蛋白質	5.3g/ 克
Total fat/ 總脂肪	0.5g/ 克
- Saturated fat/ 飽和脂肪	0.1g/ 克
- Trans fat/ 反式脂肪	0g/ 克
Carbohydrates/ 碳水化合物	93.7g/ 克
- Sugars/ 糖	42g/ 克
Sodium/ 鈉	1100mg/ 毫克

Answer 2: Corn Flakes C is a better choice as it has much less sugars in each 100 g.

STEP 3

REFER TO THE PERCENTAGE NUTRIENT REFERENCE VALUE (%NRV) (IF AVAILABLE)

%NRV is a relative expression of the nutritional content. It tells you whether there is a lot or a little of a nutrient in the stated amount of food on a scale from 0% to 100%. A high percentage means the food contains a lot of a nutrient whereas a low percentage means it contains just a little. In case the %NRV of energy or those nutrients that should be consumed less (e.g. total fat or sugars) is at the high-end, think twice before making the purchase of that particular food product as it is very likely that the food may contribute a great proportion of your daily allowances of these nutrients.

%NRV may come in different terms in nutrition labels. For example, in Hong Kong, a set of NRV is adopted and the energy and nutrient values may be presented as %Chinese NRV. %Daily Value (%DV) or %Daily Intake (%DI) may be used in other places, and their values may be different from those adopted in Hong Kong.

THIS PAMPHLET IS PREPARED BY THE TASK FORCE ON NUTRITION LABELLING EDUCATION COMPRISING MEMBERS FROM:

Question 3: Which is a better choice?



Soup E:

Nutrition Information 營養資料		
Servings Per Package/ 每包裝所含食用分量數目: 2		
Serving Size/ 食用分量: 200g / 200克		
Per Serving/ 每食用分量	%Chinese NRV	Per Serving/ 每食用分量的中國營養素參考值百分比
Energy/ 能量	116kcal/千卡	6%
Protein/ 蛋白質	3.2g/克	5%
Total fat/ 總脂肪	7.0g/克	12%
- Saturated fat/ 飽和脂肪	2.0g/克	10%
- Trans fat/ 反式脂肪	0g/克	
Carbohydrates/ 碳水化合物	10g/克	3%
- Sugars/ 糖	2.5g/克	
Sodium/ 鈉	940mg/毫克	47%

Soup F:

Nutrition Information 營養資料		
Servings Per Package/ 每包裝所含食用分量數目: 2		
Serving Size/ 食用分量: 200g / 200克		
Per Serving/ 每食用分量	%Chinese NRV	Per Serving/ 每食用分量的中國營養素參考值百分比
Energy/ 能量	78kcal/千卡	4%
Protein/ 蛋白質	3.0g/克	5%
Total fat/ 總脂肪	1.4g/克	2%
- Saturated fat/ 飽和脂肪	0g/克	0%
- Trans fat/ 反式脂肪	0g/克	
Carbohydrates/ 碳水化合物	13.4g/克	4%
- Sugars/ 糖	3.3g/克	
Sodium/ 鈉	620mg/毫克	31%

Most importantly, weight maintenance is more than just eating a healthy diet. It is about energy balance, so let's eat healthily, have regular exercise and establish a healthy lifestyle.

Answer 3:

Soup F is a better choice as it has less energy and much less total fat in each serving (i.e. 200 g).

- Association of Hong Kong Nursing Staff
- Centre for Health Education and Health Promotion, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Committee on Home-School Co-operation
- Consumer Council
- Department of Health
- Education Bureau
- Food and Environmental Hygiene Department
- Hong Kong Dietitians Association
- Hong Kong Nutrition Association
- Hospital Authority
- The Hong Kong Medical Association

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