

Information on How to Read Food Labels

food intolerance

management plan

Choosing suitable low FODMAP food products whilst shopping can be a time-consuming task! The ingredients list is important to read to establish if a food is suitably low in FODMAPs. However, there is a lot of other information about the food that is provided on packaging that is useful for you to know.

Understanding information on food labels

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is a section of the Government that sets food standards covering content and labelling of food sold in both Australia and New Zealand. These standards also apply to food imported for sale in Australia and New Zealand.

FSANZ's main goal is to promote a safe food supply and help support consumers to make well-informed decisions regarding the food supply. Food companies and retailers must comply with food standards (regulations) in the FSANZ Code. These are legal requirements and non-compliance can result in penalties. For more detailed information on general labelling requirements, visit the Foods Standards Australia and New Zealand (FSANZ) website www.foodstandards.gov.au (also see helpful links section of this website).

Food labelling laws

There are laws relating to the information provided on food packaging. These include:

- Name/description of the product
- Lot identification
- Name and business address of manufacturer
- Country of origin
- The weight of the product
- Date marking
- A list of ingredients of the product

- Identification of allergens
- The amount of a 'characterising' (key) ingredient present in the food must list how much it contributes (as a percentage) to the total ingredients in the food product. A characterising ingredient is one that appears in the name of the product, or in a picture on the packaging. For example, in 'Strawberry Yoghurt', the strawberry is the characterising ingredient. The amount of strawberries present in the yoghurt must be printed on the label as a %. The other ingredients do not need % contribution listed as they are not characterising ingredients.
- Nutrition information panel (a detailed discussion is following)
- Identification of processing aids.

The nutrition information panel

The nutrition information panel will provide information about the product per serve (as defined by the manufacturer) and per 100g or 100mL. All packaged products must have a nutrition information panel including the following minimum information:

- Energy (kilojoules)
- Protein
- Fat, with saturated fat listed separately
- Carbohydrate, with total sugars listed separately
- Sodium
- Other nutrients if a nutrition claim is made (e.g., 'gluten-free', 'low fat', 'high fibre')

If a product makes a dietary claim, the nutrient of the claim must be listed in the nutrition information panel. For example, if the manufacturer claims that the product is 'high fibre', then the fibre content must be listed, as demonstrated in the label below.

High Fibre Sultana and Almond Breakfast Cereal

Nutrition Information	Per 40 g serve	Per 100 g
Energy	636 kJ	1590 kJ
Protein	8.2 g	20.6 g
Fat	1.3 g	3.3 g
Saturated Fat	0.2 g	0.5 g
Carbohydrate - Total	26.4 g	65.9 g
- Sugars	4.2 g	10.5 g
Sodium	38 mg	95 mg
Fibre	3 g	7.5 g

Ingredients: Brown rice flour, maize starch, quinoa flour, sultana (10%), rice bran, sugar, almond slices (3%), salt, vanilla flavour, caramel.

Requirements for ingredients lists

- Ingredients must be stated in descending order by ingoing weight; that is, the ingredient that is added in its manufacture in the greatest amount is listed first. Water will be listed in order of ingoing weight.
- Very small packets (less than 10cm x 10cm) and alcoholic beverages are exempt from listing ingredients, but the supplier must be able to provide this information if requested.
- A law exists for the mandatory (compulsory) declaration of ingredients that are derived from a list of defined *allergens*. These allergens are
 - gluten (wheat, rye, barley, oats)
 - soy
 - milk
 - fish
 - shellfish (crustaceans and molluscs)
 - tree nuts
 - peanuts

- sesame seeds
- eggs

Onion is NOT an allergen, so it is not compulsory to list onion-sourced ingredients –see further information below.

- **Compound ingredients** are ingredients within the whole food product that have their own ingredients. For example, ‘mayonnaise’ as an ingredient in a dip. The mayonnaise has its own ingredients. If the compound ingredient (mayonnaise) makes up 5% or **more** of the final product (dip), all of the ingredients of the mayonnaise will be written (within brackets) within the list of the whole dip’s ingredients:
 - Spinach Dip: Spinach (58%), Mayonnaise (oil, egg, vinegar, salt), Garlic, Salt, Emulsifier.

If a compound ingredient (e.g., soy sauce powder) makes up **less** than 5% or more of the final product (e.g., rice cracker), then only allergens present in the compound ingredient will be written (within brackets) within the list of the whole dip’s ingredients:

- Teriyaki Rice Crackers: Rice (85%), Soy Sauce Powder (wheat), Oil, Salt

- **Processing aids** such as flour used to dust moulds of confectionery are declared on the label.

Identifying FODMAPS in foods

As previously outlined, FODMAPs are only a problem when consumed in significant amounts, regularly in the diet. In other words, if food contains ingredients that are FODMAPs in more than tiny amounts, they should be avoided. The FODMAP content of foods are listed in Chapter 3 of the **Food Intolerance Management Plan**.

However, some foods may contain FODMAP ingredients, but can still be eaten without causing symptoms because they are present in too small a quantity to contribute to the induction of gut symptoms. For example, if honey, which is on the FODMAP list, is present in very small amounts (such as less than 5% of the whole

product), then the product would most likely be suitable to consume.

Here are two more examples, this time looking at fructose as the specific ingredient.

Example 1: Pineapple-flavoured sports drink

The food label says 'Distilled water, *fructose*, reconstituted fruit juices (pineapple, grape), food acid, flavour, preservative'.

Is this drink suitable?

Fructose is the second ingredient in this sports drink. This indicates that fructose is present in large amounts. It is the main sweetener of the product. It is, therefore, recommended to avoid consuming this product.

Example 2: Wheat-free bread mix

The food label says 'Maize flour, potato flour, tapioca flour, milk solids, bicarb soda, salt, *fructose*, preservative.

Is this bread mix suitable?

Fructose is the seventh (second-last) ingredient in this bread mix. It is present as an incidental ingredient only. It does not have a purpose of being a sweetener in the product. The product is not sweet. Therefore, it would be acceptable to consume this product even though fructose is present as an ingredient. It is in minute amounts – even less than the amount of salt that is in the mix!

Avoiding onion in packaged foods

Although the information provided above suggests it is suitable to include foods that contain problem FODMAP ingredients if they are present in minute amounts, the exception to this concept is onion – it is recommended to avoid foods containing onion even if present in minute amounts.

As onion is recognised as being one of the major triggers for inducing symptoms of IBS in people, it is important to be on the 'onion lookout' when purchasing packaged food items from, for example, the supermarket. The main types of foods that could contain onion are savoury foods such as stocks, gravies, soups, sauces, marinades, potato crisps and other savoury snacks like rice crackers.

Onion is not an 'allergen' so it does not have to be declared on the ingredients list if it is a component of other ingredients. Be aware that onion could be 'hiding' in the following ingredients:

- Chicken salt
- Vegetable salt
- Vegetable powder
- Dehydrated vegetables

It is recommended to read ingredients on packaged foods and avoid those containing onion, onion powder, shallots and the 'hidden onion' ingredients listed above where possible.

For people who do not tolerate **garlic**, also avoid garlic and 'hidden garlic' ingredients such as 'vegetable salt', 'vegetable powder' and 'dehydrated vegetables'.

Practical Tips:

- *Be on the 'onion lookout'* in freshly cooked food and packaged food items e.g. supermarket / retail food products
- *For freshly cooked foods*, do not use onion (brown, white, Spanish), the white part of spring onion or shallots in your cooking. Leeks are also a problem and must be avoided.
- *Alternatives* to the use of onion in cooking include
 - Chives;
 - The *green part* of spring onion, although individual tolerance to this should be assessed;
 - Other fresh and dried herbs and spices
 - Asafoetida powder

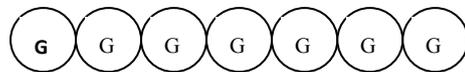
Understanding wheat label reading on a low FODMAP diet

Wheat is only a problem ingredient on a *low FODMAP diet* when consumed in large amounts (e.g., as breads, cereals and pasta). Examples of such foods are listed in the table 'Suggested Alternatives for Foods When Wheat is the Main Ingredient' on page 41 in Chapter 4 'How to Implement the low FODMAP diet'.

Trace amounts of wheat are present in many foods! Foods that contain wheat, but are not listed in the table following, are not a problem for people following a *low FODMAP diet*. An example is wheat in soy sauce. These wheat ingredients are often safe, as described below.

Australia has food labelling laws where it is compulsory for all wheat-derived ingredients to be declared on the label. However, it is important to realise many wheat ingredients are safe on the *low FODMAP diet*. Many of these are actually chains of glucose, and do not contain fructans! These include:

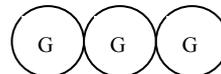
- wheat starch, wheat thickeners



- wheat maltodextrin, wheat dextrin



- wheat dextrose



- wheat glucose, wheat colour caramel



What about food additives?

There are many food additives that are permitted for use in processed foods. There are only a few that you need to avoid on the low FODMAP diet. These are the polyols, which are classified as 'sweeteners' and 'humectants'. Fortunately, these are listed in by either name or food additive number. When listed by name, they are easy to recognise as they end in '-ol'. Because there are many food additives, they have been listed in the following Table, according to whether they are high FODMAP and to be avoided, or low FODMAP and suitable. Even if thickeners or other food additives are declared as being made from wheat, they are suitable on a *low FODMAP diet* as the amount and type of wheat present are not a problem, as described above

Food additives: what to avoid and what is suitable

High FODMAP: AVOID!	sorbitol (420) mannitol (421) xylitol (967)	maltitol (965) other ingredients ending in '-ol', except for erythritol
Low FODMAP: SUITABLE!	acidity regulators anti-caking agents antifoaming agent antioxidants bulking agents colourings colour fixatives emulsifiers enzymes firming agents flavours flavour enhancers	foaming agents gelling agents glazing agents mineral salts preservatives propellants raising agents sequestrants stabilisers sweeteners (other than those listed above) thickeners