

Healthy eating

Longer life food by Yvonne Wilkins, Dietitian with Diabetes TASMANIA

Fresh foods such as fruit, vegetables, dairy foods, eggs & meat make up a major portion of the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating – but what do you do when you can't make it to the shops very often or it's a long way to travel to a shop? Here I'm going to give a few tips to help find the healthiest types of packaged foods. I've also included some information that I gathered about fruit and vegetable delivery days for small shops in some rural areas.

Processed foods contribute at least three-quarters of our salt intake. Did you catch that? Three-quarters! That means that the choices you make about packaged foods will have a bigger impact on whether you eat too much salt than whether you add it at the table.

Processed foods can also contain hidden fats and be high in kilojoules but low in nutrients. Often the lines are blurred and it can be difficult to know when a packaged food goes in the "everyday" food groups or in the "sometimes" food group.

The answer is in the label. Here's some tips to help you navigate confusion on food labels.

Label reading

Look at the ingredients lists and nutrition information panel rather than going by claims and bright writing and pictures on the front of the packet. The ingredients are listed in order the largest in terms of amount to the smallest. If the first one or two ingredients listed on packaged food are from the main food groups ("everyday" foods) such as whole wheat, milk and fruit, then give that food extra brownie points.

Use the "Per 100g" column on the label and compare the total fat between two or more similar products and choose the one with the least amount of total fat. You can also use this method for saturated fat

and salt. This is easier than trying to remember numbers of grams of fat, and saturated fat or milligrams of salt that you should limit your choices to.

Many people look at sugar on labels but this information alone will not tell you the effect a product will have on your blood glucose level. The total carbohydrate is more relevant and can be used to work out how much carbohydrate you will eat at a meal. For each main meal a very general guide is to aim for 45g at each main meal and 15-30 grams for a snack (figures are for adults). However, it will vary depending on individual needs.

Salt

The chemical name for salt is sodium chloride. The definition of a low sodium food by Foods Standards Australia & New Zealand is one that contains less than 120mg of sodium per 100g. The Dietary Guidelines state "Choose foods low in salt". So to get the full benefits (especially reducing and preventing high blood pressure) aim to choose products at or below this amount of sodium. This is not an easy task with many basic foods such as bread and cheese far exceeding these levels. You can still dramatically reduce your sodium intake by choosing the foods with the lowest figure per 100g for that food category. For example 300mg per 100g is far better than 800mg per 100g and may help you work your way towards low salt eating, by practising reading the labels and adjusting your taste-buds. The best way to reduce sodium (salt) intake is to include as many fresh and unprocessed foods as you can to your eating pattern.

Here are some suggestions of some of the healthiest packaged foods – I've favoured the ones that are low fat (and low saturated fat), low sodium and lower glycaemic index (GI). Most are also high in fibre.

- Dried beans, lentils (red lentils are an excellent quick cooking option)
- Baked beans – salt reduced type
- Canned beans - salt reduced or no-added-salt types
- Tinned vegetables – salt reduced



or no-added-salt types, for example tinned corn and tinned tomatoes

- Barley
- Rice – Doongara, Basmati, Mahatma, Moolgiri are the lowest GI types so worth looking for. Brown rice is an excellent choice – choose Sunrice and Doongara types for medium GI values.
- Pasta
- Noodles – check the salt & fat content
- Tinned fruit in natural juice (drain juice before eating)
- Some breakfast cereals – try finding high fibre, low sodium types, low GI types – eg. many of the natural (untoasted) muesli's, whole rolled oats and Kellogg's Sustain are ones that fit all the criteria in my search (but note that not all breakfast cereals have had their GI tested).

Have a look at the latest edition (2008) of the pocket-sized Healthy Shopping Guide by Diabetes Australia for more suggestions of products to look for and other handy tips.

Fresh fruit and vegies

If you have access to the internet, visit the "Go for 2&5" website www.gofor2and5.com.au to see a fantastic A-Z guide of choosing the freshest fruit & vegies. Click on Why Go for 2&5®? And then click on "Fruit and Vegie guide".

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Longer life food (continued from overleaf)

I've done a little research myself and found out the delivery days of fruit and vegetables for towns more than 50km (approx) from larger towns that have major supermarkets. If you live in these areas this list will help you to know when to go to get the freshest fruit and vegetables. Buying more fruit and vegetables at your local shop helps the shop to have a good turnover and keep up a supply of the freshest produce.

Small supermarkets or grocery shops approximately* 50km or more from larger towns with major supermarkets (listed in Yellow pages).

Town	Name & address of shop	Fruit & Veg delivery days
Bicheno	Festival IGA, 39 Foster St	M, W, F approx 9am
Branxholm	Shopping Centre	M,T,W mornings & Fr midday
Bridport	Supermarket	M, W, F before 8am
Campbell Town	Festival IGA	M, Tu, W, Th, F approx 9am
Coles Bay	Iluka Supermarket, Esplanade	M, W, F mornings
Coles Bay	Garnet Ave	M, W, F mornings
Currie	King Island Foodworks, 6 Main St	M, W, F
Currie	King Island IGA Everyday	M, W, F approx 2pm
Dover	Grocer, 6966 Huon Hwy	Th (main delivery) Mon (top-up)
Dover	Festival IGA, Southgate Centre	M, W, F afternoons
Fingal	Friendly Grocer IGA Stores	M am & pm, W, Th, Fr mornings
Flinders Island	Value Plus IGA, Patrick St	M, Tu, afternoons
Geeveston	Mic & Mac's Tas Everyday, Church St	M, W, F
Geeveston	Foodworks, Church Street	M, Tu, W, Th, F by 2pm. S & S - local produce
Nubeena	Sea Change IGA 1856 Main Rd	M, W, F approx 3:30
Nubeena	Value Plus IGA, Main Rd Nubeena	Friday afternoon
Oatlands	Corner Store, 59 High St	M, Tu, W, Th, F approx 7:30am
Oatlands	Roxy Supermarket	M, Tu, W, Th, F
Orford	Foodmart, 3 Charles Street	M, W, F mornings
Queenstown	Festival IGA, 52 Orr St	Tu, Th & Sat before 10am
Queenstown	Value Plus IGA, 30 Orr St	Tu, Th & Sat before 10am
Rosebery	Value Plus IGA	M, Tu, Th, Sat before 9am
Redpa	Friendly Grocer IGA	Tu & F mornings
Rocky Cape	Friendly Grocer IGA	M, W & F approx 2pm
Scamander	Supermarket	M, Th & Sat
St Helens	Value Plus IGA	M, W & F mornings
St Marys	Value Plus Supermarket, Main St	M, Tu, We, Th & F mornings
Strahan	Festival IGA	Tu, Th & Sat before 7am
Swansea	Morris' Store, 13 Franklin St	M, W, F, 8:30-10:30am
Swansea	Corner Store, 8 Franklin Street	M, W, F, before 9am
Triabunna	Value Plus IGA	M,W,F, before 8am
Zeehan	Value Plus IGA	Tu, Th & Sat

Thank you to all of these shops for providing this information.

* For some of the areas, that I'm not as familiar with, I estimated distances using a map to decide which towns to include, so forgive me if I've missed a town!

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Information about products, especially breakfast cereals, was gathered using data on the Eatingsafe website which can be found at www.eatingsafe.com.au *The Low GI Shopper's Guide to GI Values 2008* by Jeannie Brand – Miller and Kaye Foster-Powell, and the *Healthy Shopping Guide* by Diabetes Australia.