

FOOD LABELLING — FOR — HEALTHY EATING

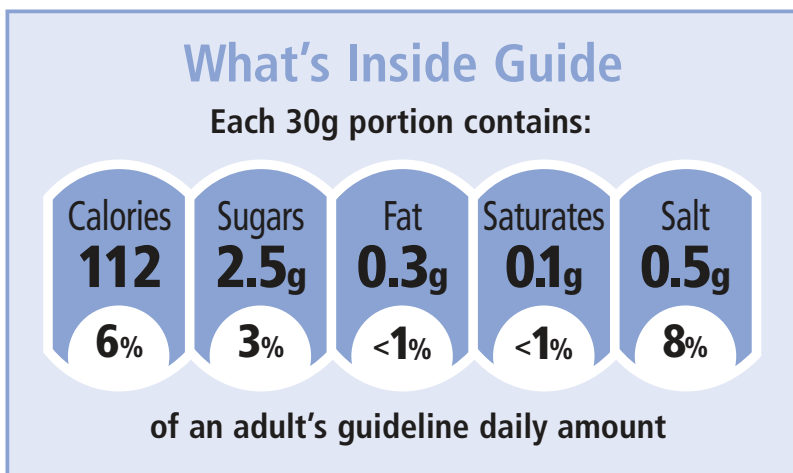
**UNDERSTANDING THE
WHAT'S INSIDE GUIDE AND GDAs**



Giving patients the tools to help themselves to a better diet

Poor dietary habits and the rise in nutrition-related health problems, especially obesity, have been key concerns for healthcare professionals and government alike for a number of years.

Improved food labelling is one of the important initiatives that has been introduced recently to help consumers make more informed choices. The *What's Inside Guide* is a new food label based on Guideline Daily Amounts (GDAs). GDAs have long been featured by some manufacturers and retailers on the nutrient panel on the back of food packs (and still are by a majority). However, they are now being adopted by increasing numbers of food companies for use on the front of pack also (see below) and can be seen on thousands of products.



One of the ways in which patients can be helped to improve their diets is by encouraging them to take more notice of what's inside the food they choose to eat. The *What's Inside Guide* gives information about how much energy, sugars, fat, saturated fat and salt is in a stated portion of food and, importantly, puts this information in the context of their whole diet by showing what percentage of an adult's GDA this is.

This Toolkit includes a Desktop Presenter which is designed to help healthcare professionals encourage patients to gain an understanding of GDAs and the *What's Inside Guide* and show them how to use it to help improve their diets.



Guideline Daily Amounts: a brief history

GDA's were first developed in 1998 as a means of putting some consumer friendly figures to the government's nutrition guidelines. These were then used as part of the nutrition information on the back of food packs and initially only a few nutrients were considered. In 2003 the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD)¹ established a GDA Technical Working Group made up of nutrition experts from industry as well as independent organisations.² The role of this group was to check that the original GDA values were still valid and to extend the guidelines so that they included GDAs for carbohydrates, total sugars, fat, saturates, protein, fibre, salt and sodium for men, women and children.

These values were used widely on the back of food packets. In 2005, the use of GDAs as a basis for nutrition labelling was further extended with the introduction of the first front of pack labels showing actual nutrient and calorie content per portion and what percentage of the GDA this represents. These labels were designed to help shoppers see at a glance what is inside their food. Their use is now widespread and they have become known as the *What's Inside Guide*.

	Calories	Sugars	Fat	Saturates	Salt
Adults	2000	90g	70g	20g	6g
Children 5-10	1800	85g	70g	20g	4g

GDAs are based on dietary recommendations for an adult of healthy weight and average activity level, with no special dietary needs.

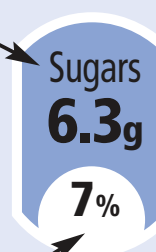
GDA values for sugars, fat, saturates and salt are upper limits for consumption. The calories value is a guide to aim for.

Making science into a lifestyle choice

Allowing consumers to make more informed decisions about what they eat and how it fits into their overall diet was a key factor recognised in the Government's Choosing Health White Paper of 2004.

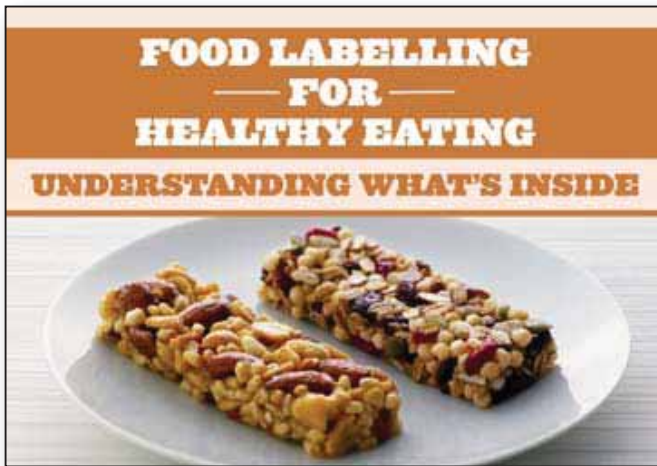
All companies that have adopted the *What's Inside Guide* are using a visually consistent format, so that consumers will find it easier to recognise and use the label in order to make quick decisions about the food they are about to buy.

This figure tells you how many grams/calories there are in one portion of your food



This is the percentage of your overall Guideline Daily Amount that you are about to eat

How to use the Desktop Presenter

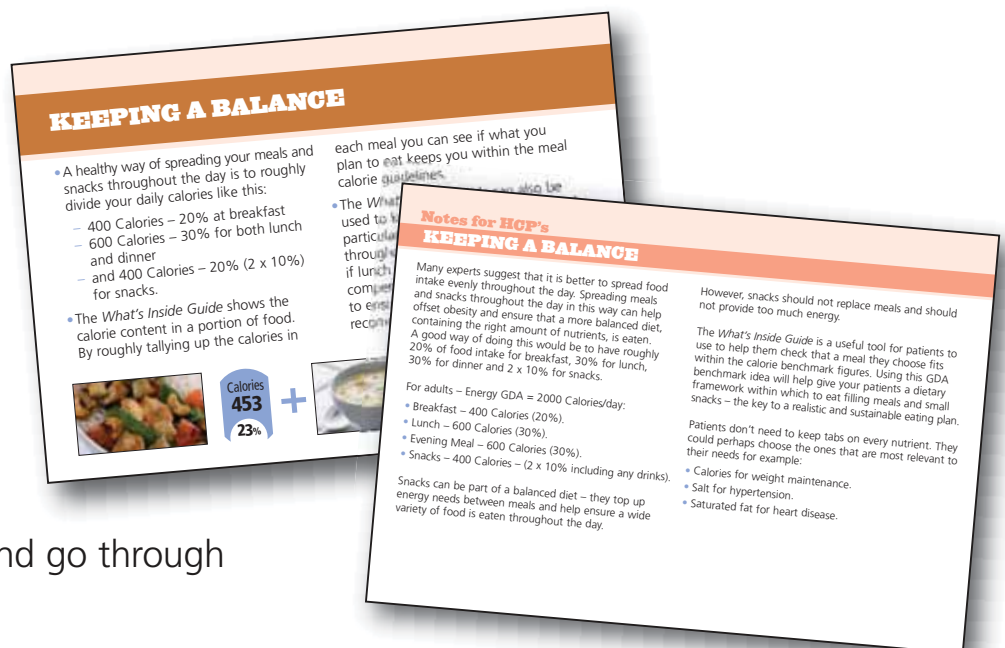


The Desktop Presenter is for healthcare professionals to use with adult patients. GDAs apply to adults and children of normal weight and average activity level, who have no extra dietary requirements. The information on the *What's Inside Guide* label can help guide patients to better understand what is in a product and how it contributes to a balanced diet, thereby helping them to take the first steps towards achieving and maintaining a healthy diet.

The Desktop Presenter contains SIX sections:

1. Introduction to Healthy Eating – this gives eight top tips
2. The *What's Inside Guide* and GDAs explained
3. How to use the *What's Inside Guide* to **check, compare** and **choose** between foods to help achieve a balanced diet
4. How the *What's Inside Guide* can be used to benchmark nutrient levels and help patients keep tabs on their nutrients of concern
5. Explanation of back of pack labelling
6. Guiding the patients to personalised action

Each of the above sections has a clear, illustrated patient facing side with a more explanatory side for the healthcare professional. The format should allow healthcare professionals and patients to sit together across a table and go through the programme.



Using GDAs to balance the diet

The presenter will show patients how to use the *What's Inside Guide* to:

- **Check** their food and find out how many calories and key nutrients it contains
- **Compare** foods they buy with other similar foods
- **Choose** the foods that best suit their needs
- **Count** up nutrients such as salt to roughly keep tabs on what is eaten in a day

Many experts suggest that it is good to spread food intake evenly throughout the day, as it may help offset obesity and ensure that a more balanced diet, containing the right amount of nutrients, is eaten. A good way of doing this would be to have roughly 20% of food intake for breakfast, 30% for lunch, 30% for dinner and 2 x 10% for snacks.

In practice this would work out: For adults – Energy GDA = 2000 Calories/day:

- Breakfast – 400 Calories (20%)
- Lunch – 600 Calories (30%)
- Evening Meal – 600 Calories (30%)
- Snacks – 400 Calories – (2x10% including any drinks)

The *What's Inside Guide* can provide a useful tool for patients to help them plan their meals by checking whether the amount of calories in a meal is similar to the benchmark figures outlined above. Using this GDA benchmark idea will help give your patients a dietary framework within which to eat filling meals and small snacks – the key to a realistic and sustainable eating plan.

As a healthcare professional, you may want to suggest that a patient focuses particularly on one nutrient, for example:

- Calories for weight maintenance
- Salt for hypertension
- Saturated fat for heart disease

Food labels are sometimes laborious to read but this new consistent format will make it easier for shoppers to see at a glance what's inside the food they are choosing. If used and understood, these labels can help patients make more informed choices about foods and hopefully begin a journey towards better dietary habits for life.

For further copies of the Toolkit please call the FDF GDA Advice Line on 020 7820 9764

Useful contacts

Institute of Grocery Distribution

Best Practice Guidance on the Presentation of Guideline Daily Amounts (2006)

Website: www.IGD.com

What's Inside Guide (Food & Drink Federation)

Website: www.whatsinsideguide.com

Food and Drink Federation

Website: www.foodfitness.org.uk

Food Standards Agency

Website: www.eatwell.gov.uk

British Nutrition Foundation

Website: www.nutrition.org.uk

British Dietetic Association

Website: www.bda.uk.com

Department of Health

Website: www.dh.gov.uk

References:

- 1 IGD is the key research organisation for the Food and Grocery sector and provides a forum for discussion, learning and specifically opportunities for improvement and the development and sharing of best practice.
- 2 The technical body was made up of representatives from British Nutrition Foundation, Institute of Child Health, British Heart Foundation, Health Promotion Research Group, Medical Research Council, Heinz, Unilever UK Foods, Food and Drink Federation, Compass Purchasing Ltd, Masterfoods, Kellogg Europe, The Co-Operative Group, Tesco Stores Ltd, British Retail Consortium, IGD and individual expertise was sought where appropriate.

