

How to read a sweet label

From the sweeties.net wiki

Every bag of packed sweets has to carry certain information by law. Once you know where to look, a label tells you what is in the sweet, how much sugar it has, whether it contains your allergen, and whether any warnings apply.

The basics

UK law requires packed food to show, among other things, the name of the food, a list of ingredients if there is more than one, the net quantity in grams, any special storage conditions, a best before or use by date if required, any necessary warnings, and the name and address of the business marketing the food.

The ingredients list

- **Order.** Ingredients must be listed in order of weight, with the main ingredient first. If sugar comes first, the sweet contains more sugar by weight than anything else.
- **Percentages.** A percentage must be shown for an ingredient that is highlighted on the pack, mentioned in the name or usually associated with the product, so strawberry sweets may tell you how much strawberry they contain.
- **Additives.** The list must say what each additive does, followed by its name or its E number, such as gelling agent: pectin, or glazing agent: carnauba wax: see [what are E numbers in sweets?](#)
- **Allergens.** Any of the 14 allergens must be highlighted in the ingredients list using a different font, style or background colour, for example bold: see [the 14 allergens explained for sweets](#)

The nutrition table

The nutrition declaration must give the energy value and the amounts of fat, saturates, carbohydrate, sugars, protein and salt, expressed per 100 g, so you can compare one sweet with another. Some packs also give a percentage of the reference intake, which for an average adult is 2,000 kcal of energy and 90 g of sugars a day.

That 90 g figure is for total sugars. The NHS advises that adults have no more than 30 g of free sugars a day, the kind added to sweets. On a label, more than 22.5 g of sugars per 100 g counts as high: see [how much sugar is in sweets?](#)

Warnings the law requires

Some sweets must carry set wording:

- **With sweeteners**, or **with sugar and sweeteners**, next to the name of the food, when sweeteners are used.
- **Contains a source of phenylalanine**, when a sweet contains aspartame.
- **Excessive consumption may produce laxative effects**, when more than 10 per cent of the sweet is added polyols, the sugar alcohols used in sugar free sweets: see [why do sugar free sweets carry a laxative warning?](#)
- **Contains liquorice**, and for confectionery with 4 g or more of glycyrrhizinic acid per kilo, a warning that people suffering from hypertension should avoid excessive consumption: see [liquorice and blood pressure](#)
- **May have an adverse effect on activity and attention in children**, for sweets containing any of six particular colours: see [why do some sweets have a warning about children?](#)

Dates

Packed sweets need a best before date unless they are exempt, and best before is about quality rather than safety. Sweets made almost solely of flavoured or coloured sugars, and chewing gum, do not need a date at all: see [do sweets go out of date?](#)

Loose sweets

Loose pick and mix does not come with a label on each sweet, but the seller must still give you allergen information: see [pick and mix and allergies](#) On our shop, every sweet card opens up to show its ingredients and allergens before you buy.

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100 pts = 1 tree

Plant a tree in Scotland

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