

Are light or lite products better for you?



Diabetes
New Zealand

Are foods labelled 'light' or 'lite' better choices for people with diabetes? Alison Pask, a New Zealand registered dietitian, highlights some products labelled light or lite and explains why you should be aware.

Light or lite has a variety of meanings. The label may mean one of the following or perhaps even a combination of these: less energy; less fat; less sugar; less salt.

Light or lite may even refer to the colour of the food, that is, a lighter shade. It doesn't stop there - it may weigh less, meaning it's lighter in weight.

A walk through the supermarket reveals how confusing these terms are and how food manufacturers use light or lite in a variety of ways.

To make shopping easier:

- Any claim made on a label must be explained somewhere on the packet, so look to find the explanation
- Check out all the ingredients listed
- Read more details about the nutrition content on the Nutrition Information Panel
- Don't be fooled into thinking it's okay for you just because it's light or lite - check products out with your own dietitian if in doubt.

Rizzoli Extra Light Olive Oil is 100% olive oil with a light colour

Lupi Extra Light Olive Oil has an extra mild flavour

Both oils have as much fat and energy as any other oil.



A wide range of lite salad dressings and mayonnaises is available. It is likely these dressings contain less fat than the standard product but watch out for the sugar and salt content. Just because they are low in fat doesn't mean they won't contribute to weight gain.

Eta lite & free Honey Mustard Dressing is 99% fat free but contains 32% sugar. There are more appropriate choices for people with diabetes so don't select your dressing just on how much fat it has.



Wattie's Tomato Sauce Lite contains 39% less sodium (salt) and 37% less sugar than Wattie's standard tomato sauce. But **Gregg's Lite Tomato Sauce** has only 25% less salt than Gregg's standard tomato sauce and no reduction in sugar.

The Nutrition Information Panel reveals Gregg's Lite has 170mg sodium per 100g while Wattie's Lite contains over three times this at 540mg per 100g. The sugar content for the two brands is similar with one tablespoon of sauce providing less than 3.5g sugar.

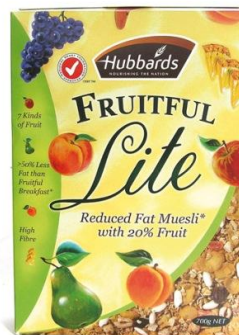


Kraft Light peanut spread contains 25% less fat than regular Kraft peanut butter. While this sounds good, be aware it also contains added salt and sugar. Two tablespoons add an extra 15g of carbohydrate.

This may be enough to push your blood glucose over recommended levels. Read the label carefully and choose a peanut butter without added sugar.



Hubbards Fruitful Lite Muesli has 50% less fat than Fruitful Breakfast and is also high in fibre. But check the list of ingredients for cereal to see if there is added sugar. This product has brown sugar and honey as well as 20% dried fruit resulting in a total sugar content of 25.2g per 100g.



All breakfast cereals contain carbohydrate so count them towards your total carbohydrate eaten.



Some muesli bars are labelled lite. **Leda nutrition 98% fat free lite bar** contains 30g carbohydrate per bar of which 21.5g is sugar. Each bar provides 674KJ (161Kcals).

Wattie's lite peaches with no added sugar are a good choice. They are sweetened with artificial sweetener but there is some natural sugar found in the peaches themselves. The Nutrition Information Panel shows this to be 4.2g per 100g.

SPC Sliced Peaches in lite juice are sweetened with fruit juice. While fruit juice does contain some natural sugar, the product has 25% less energy than fruit in a light syrup. 100g of this product contains 7.5g sugar.



Wattie's fruit salad in light syrup is sweetened with some sugar resulting in 14.2g sugar per 100g.



Many chippies are labelled light. These **Pringles Light** contain 33% less fat than the standard product, but they still contain 25% fat - that's one quarter fat. They also contribute carbohydrate and salt, so eat only in small quantities occasionally when your blood glucose is well controlled.

Just Juice Bubbles lite is a mix of half Just Juice and half diet lemonade. It has too much sugar for someone with diabetes. A 250ml glass provides over three teaspoons of sugar.