



## **FACT SHEET: BARS CATEGORY**

Did you know that Australians now snack four times more than they did 10 years ago? This growing consumer demand for snack foods has led to considerable innovation in this category, with bars being no exception. Manufacturers are reformulating their bars to increase the whole grain and fibre content, and reduce sugar, sodium and saturated fat. We've also seen the incorporation of novel ingredients such as puffed chickpeas.

According to the 2017 GLNC Consumption Study, 13% of Australians aged 2-70 years ate muesli bars and 11% ate other bars. While bars are not an everyday food they can form part of a healthy, balanced diet as many are a source of whole grain and/or fibre. Additionally, while the serving size and nutrient profile of varies, the 2011-12 National Nutrition Survey showed that overall muesli or cereal style bars only contribute 0.7% of total sugars and 0.8% of free or added sugars to the Australian diet.

In January 2017, GLNC examined the nutritional profile of 151 bars found in four different retail supermarkets in North Sydney/Neutral Bay area of Sydney. The review used on pack information, including nutritional information, claims, logos and ingredients to determine the amount of fibre, protein, saturated fat, sodium, sugars and whole grains per serve per 100g.

The comprehensive analysis included:

- 54 Grain based bars: includes bars based on rice (i.e. LCMS), fruit filled wheat bars (i.e. K-Time Twists) and gluten free bars.
- 94 Muesli/oat based bars: bars based on oats including muesli and granola bars.
- 3 Legume bars: bars that include ≥5% legumes such as chickpeas, where grains or oats are not the major ingredient.

The results were classified according to Food Standards Australia New Zealand 1.2.7 Nutrition, Health and Related Claims criteria.

### **Serving Size**

The average serving size of grain, muesli and legume based bars is 30g.

Type	AVERAGE SERVING SIZE (g)	SERVING SIZE RANGE (g)
Grain based bars	29.6	19.0 - 45.0
Muesli/oat based bars	33.8	15.0 - 45.0
Legume bars	32.0	28.0 - 40.0

### **Health Star Rating (HSR)**

- 68.5% of grain based bars and 60% of muesli/oat based bars carried the HSR on pack.
- Half of the muesli/oat based bars (50%) were rated 4 stars or more.\*
- 46% of the grain based bars were rated 2.5 stars or less.\*

Type	% WITH HSR ON PACK (number)	2.5 STARS OR LESS (%)*	3.5 OR MORE STARS (%)*	4 OR MORE STARS (%)*
Grain based bars	68.5 (37)	45.9	45.9	35.1



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Muesli/oat based bars	59.6 (56)	17.9	66.1	50.0
Legume bars	100.0 (3)	0.0	66.7	66.7

\*of products with HSR on pack

### Whole Grain

- Nearly a third (31%) of muesli/oat based bars were high in whole grain according to the GLNC Code of practice for Whole Grain Ingredient Content Claims.\*

\*where whole grain content could be assessed

Type	AVERAGE g per serve	RANGE g per serve	ELIGIBLE TO MAKE CLAIM ≥8g/serve (%)	CONTAINS ≥8g/serve - <16g/serve (%)	HIGH ≥16g/serve - <24g/serve (%)	VERY HIGH ≥24 g/serve (%)
Grain based bars	4.8	0.7-16.1	9.3	80.0	20.0	0.0
Muesli/oat based bars	13.5	5.6-27.9	74.5	64.3	31.4	4.3

NB: Whole grain content was not available/not assessable on pack for 72.2% of grain based bars (n=39) and 14.9% of the muesli/oat based bars (n=14) so they could not be included in this analysis. The average and range applies to 'whole grain containing products' only. Where eligible to make whole grain claims, this is expressed as a proportion of the total category, and claim levels are reflective of eligible bars only. Legume bars were removed as none were identified to be a source of whole grain.

### Dietary Fibre

- Almost three quarters (71%) of the muesli/oat based bars and over half (54%) of grain based bars were at least source of fibre.
- 100% of legume based bars were at least a source of fibre.

Type	AVERAGE g per serve	RANGE g per serve	AT LEAST A SOURCE ≥2g/serve (%)	SOURCE ≥2g/serve - <4g/serve (%)	GOOD SOURCE ≥4g/serve - <7g/serve (%)	EXCELLENT SOURCE ≥7g/serve (%)
Grain based bars	2.4	0.1-10.4	53.7	38.9	7.4	7.4
Muesli/oat based bars	2.6	1.1-5.7	71.3	68.1	3.2	0.0
Legume bars	2.9	2.5-3.5	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

NB: Fibre information was not declared on the nutrition information panel of 8.5% of muesli/oat based bars products audited (n=8).

### Total Sugars

- The majority of the muesli/oat based bars (85%) and more than half of grain based bars (52%) contained fruit (including coconut).
- The 2011-12 National Nutrition Survey showed that overall muesli or cereal style bars only contribute 0.7% of total sugars and 0.8% of free or added sugars to the Australian diet.



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Type	WITH FRUIT PIECES % (number)	AVERAGE g per serve	RANGE g per serve	≤2 TEASPOONS* SUGAR PER SERVE (%)
Grain based bars	51.9 (28)	7.3	1.1-17.5	74.0
Muesli/oat based bars	85.1 (80)	7.7	3.6-14.2	60.6
Legume bars	66.7 (2)	6.1	3.9-8.2	66.7

\*1 teaspoon = 4g

### Saturated Fat

- Coconut, which contains saturated fat, is a common ingredient in bars. Other ingredients that contribute to the saturated fat content include vegetable oil, chocolate and yoghurt pieces.
- The majority of bars met the NHSC\* Guidelines of three grams or less saturated fat.

Type	AVERAGE g per 100g	RANGE g per 100g	AVERAGE g per serve	NHSC GUIDELINES* ≤3g/serve (%)
Grain based bars	4.0	0.4-12.5	1.1	100.0
Muesli/oat based bars	5.7	0.6-19.7	2.0	79.8
Legume bars	2.4	1.5-3.2	0.8	100.0

[\\*National Healthy School Canteen Guidelines](#)

### Tips for choosing Bars

There are a wide variety of bars available to suit different tastes and preferences. While bars are a healthier snack than other discretionary choices (i.e. chocolate, muffins and cakes), with more than half being a source of whole grain or fibre, they are not an everyday food.

To choose a healthier bar look for one that:

- Is higher in fibre and at least 2g per serve
- At least a source of whole grain (look for a whole grain claim on pack)
- Lower in total sugars
- Has a Health Star Rating of 3.5 stars or more.