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## Health Canada Consults on Nutrition Information on Food Labels

### **Report Categories:**

Policy and Program Announcements

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### **Report Highlights:**

Health Canada proposes changes to the nutrition information on food labels, based on earlier input from parents and consumers, as well as the newest scientific information. These changes are intended to make it easier to read and understand labels and help consumers make healthy food choices. Interested stakeholders have until September 11, 2014, to submit their comments to Health Canada on the proposed regulatory changes.

Health Canada is [proposing](#) to make regulatory changes to specific aspects of the food label based on the most up to date scientific information and consumption habits, as well as comments received from Canadian parents and consumers during the previous consultations.

Health Canada has submitted three consultation documents for public comment, specifically covering:

1. **Standard serving sizes for nutritional labeling.** [New guidelines](#) to help make serving sizes declared in the Nutrition Facts table more consistent among similar food products. These serving sizes would be based on the most current information on the amounts of food that Canadians actually eat in one sitting, also known as reference amounts.
  - a. For most foods that can be measured (cup, tsp, etc.), the serving size would be the reference amount (in milliliters or grams), shown together with the corresponding household measure. This means that similar products will state the same milliliter or gram amount. This guideline would apply to products such as milk, cream cheese, yogurt, flour or rice (for instance, the serving size on all large tubs of yogurt would have to be 175 g because this is the reference amount).
  - b. For most foods that come in pieces (for example, cookies, chips), the serving size would be the number of pieces closest to the reference amount, shown together with the corresponding weight (in grams). Similarly, for foods that are divided before eaten (for example, wheel of cheese, frozen pizza), the serving size would be the fraction of food closest to the reference amount, shown together with the corresponding weight (in grams). This guideline would apply to products such as crackers, cookies, muffins, bagels, cakes or lasagna (for instance, the serving size on all cracker boxes would have to be as close to 20 g as possible, as this is the reference amount, regardless of how many crackers add up to 20 grams).
  - c. Finally, for certain foods, the serving size would be more helpful if it was based on the same consumer friendly household measure (piece, slice, etc.). This guideline would apply to products such as ready-to-eat breakfast cereals, sliced bread, gum or multi-serving meats (for instance, the serving size for bread would be 2 slices, given that most people eat 2 slices of bread at a time, rather than the current practice where the serving size is either 1 or 2 slices).
2. **Sugar labeling.** Grouping of all sugar ingredients under a single ‘sugar’ name in the list of ingredients. Changes to the list of nutrients that must be declared in the Nutrition Facts table i.e. identifying added sugars, and establishing a Daily Value for sugar of 100g to help consumers identify foods that are high in sugars. Health Canada is also proposing to change the way the [sugars content of food is presented on the label](#).
  - a. Under the current proposal, all ingredients that are a type of sugar (for example: sugar, glucose-fructose, honey, fancy molasses) have to be grouped in parentheses after the common name "Sugars" and be placed in the list based on the total contribution of the sugar-based ingredients to the food.

- b. In addition, the amount of sugar added to the food would be declared as "added sugars" in the Nutrition Facts table. This is meant help consumers identify foods with added sugar and choose foods with less or no added sugar.
  - c. Finally, Health Canada is proposing to establish a Daily Value for total sugar consumption at 100g. A mandatory % Daily Value (DV) would appear in the Nutrition Facts table to help consumers identify the relative amount of sugar in a food compared to the proposed Daily Value of 100g.
3. **Changes to Nutrition Facts Table and Ingredients Label.** Changes are proposed to [the appearance of the Nutrition Facts table and the list of ingredients](#). Changes to require content of the Nutrition Facts Table are also proposed. Finally, there is a proposal to create an optional information box highlighting the presence of certain bioactive components, such as caffeine.
- a. Some proposed changes to the Nutrition Facts table:
    - i. Nutrients would be listed in a way that all of the nutrients that have a % Daily Value (DV) listed in the upper part of the table are the nutrients that Canadians may want less of, and that the nutrients with a % DV listed in the lower part of the table are the nutrients that Canadians may want more of.
    - ii. The declaration of potassium and vitamin D would be mandatory, as they nutrients that many in the Canadian population are not getting enough of, which puts them at higher risk for chronic disease. Vitamins A and C would no longer be required on the label because there is no evidence of a deficiency of these vitamins in the general population, though manufacturers could declare them voluntarily.
    - iii. A message will have to be added at the bottom of the Nutrition Facts table that would read: "5% DV or less is a little, 15% DV or more is a lot".
  - b. Some proposed changes to the List of Ingredients:
    - i. A consistent look for the list of ingredients will be required, similar to the Nutrition Facts table.
    - ii. The list of ingredients would have to appear in a distinctive box with a title, using black type on a white or neutral background for contrast, using upper and lower case letters, and having a minimum font size.

Interested stakeholders are strongly encouraged to take part in these consultations and to submit their views to Health Canada, **by September 11, 2014**, either:

1. [On Line](#)

or,

2. By regular mail or electronically at the address indicated below (if the submission is done electronically, please use the title "Nutrition Labelling Consultations" in the subject box of your email):

Bureau of Nutritional Sciences  
Food Directorate  
251 Sir Frederick Banting Driveway AL 2203E  
Tunney's Pasture, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0K9  
Email: [nut.labelling-etiquetage@hc-sc.gc.ca](mailto:nut.labelling-etiquetage@hc-sc.gc.ca)  
Fax: 613-941-6636

**Background Information:**

In the [2013 Speech from the Throne](#), the Government of Canada made the commitment to consult with parents and consumers on ways to improve the nutritional information on food labels. In response to this commitment, the Minister of Health launched a consultation process across Canada in January 2014. This process ended in April 2014 and a [What We Heard](#) report reflecting the feedback received from these consultations and those of Canadian Food Inspection Agency's [Food Labelling Modernization Initiative](#) was published on June 10, 2014. This report highlighted that many Canadians find the information currently on food labels useful. However, Canadians also had many ideas on how to improve the labels to help find, understand and better use the information.

The feedback received, along with a technical review to update various aspects of the food label, have been taken into consideration by Health Canada to develop proposed nutrition labelling changes. The three consultation documents highlighted earlier in this report provide detailed information on the proposed changes have been developed. The proposed changes as explained in these documents are open for feedback by stakeholders until September 11, 2014.

As part of its Food Labelling Modernization Initiative, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency will be further consulting in the future on additional labelling changes that are under the Agency's purview.