



Government of Canada

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Health Canada's
Proposed
Changes

Better Understanding the Sugar Content of Our Foods

What most Canadians know as “sugar” is the white or brown sugar that we use in our kitchens. But there are also other types that can be counted as “sugar” in the Nutrition Facts table, such as glucose-fructose, fructose, lactose, honey, molasses, and corn syrup.

Sugar contains 4 calories per gram. There are about 4 grams of sugar in a teaspoon, so for every teaspoon of sugar, there are approximately 16 calories.

Consuming too much sugar can lead to excess calorie consumption, which is a contributing factor to overweight and obesity. Obesity is a public health concern in Canada because it increases the risk of major chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes and cancer. As well, diets that are high in added sugar may be poor in the essential vitamins and minerals that the body needs.

As part of the work to improve the food label, Health Canada is proposing the following approaches to communicate information on sugar to consumers. The first area for improvement will be within the list of ingredients.

Better identify the contribution of all sources of sugar in the list of ingredients.

Currently, all sugar-based ingredients added directly to a food are listed separately in the list of ingredients and in descending order based on their proportion by weight to the food. Health Canada is proposing that all ingredients that are a type of sugar (for example: sugar, glucose-fructose, honey, fancy molasses) 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 as illustrated below. Since the list of ingredients shows all the ingredients in a packaged food from most to least, this approach would give consumers an idea of how much added sugar there is in their food compared to the other ingredients.

CURRENT

INGREDIENTS: WHEAT FLOUR, FANCY MOLASSES, VEGETABLE OIL SHORTENING (SOYBEAN AND/OR CANOLA AND MODIFIED PALM OIL), BROWN SUGAR, LIQUID WHOLE EGG, SUGAR, SALT, SODIUM BICARBONATE, SPICES, COLOUR
CONTAINS: WHEAT, EGG, SOY

PROPOSED

Ingredients
Sugars (fancy molasses, brown sugar, sugar) • Wheat flour • Vegetable oil shortening (soybean and/or canola and modified palm oil) • Liquid whole egg • Salt • Sodium bicarbonate • Spices • Colour
Contains: Wheat • Egg • Soy

Since the Nutrition Facts table contains information on the amounts of nutrients, as well as the % Daily Value which is intended to help consumers determine if there is a lot or a little of a nutrient in a food, two approaches are also being considered for the Nutrition Facts table that would help consumers identify the amount of added sugar and/or if the food contains a lot of sugar.

Highlight the amount of added sugar in the Nutrition Facts table.

The amount of sugar added to the food would be declared as “added sugars” in the Nutrition Facts table. This could help consumers identify foods with added sugar and choose foods with less or no added sugar. The approach is the same as the one proposed in the United States.

Provide a benchmark to help consumers identify foods that contain a lot of sugar.

Health Canada is proposing to establish a Daily Value for total sugar consumption at 100 grams.

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 100 grams. This could help consumers determine whether a serving of food is high in sugar. Using the “5% DV or less is a little and 15% DV or more is a lot” quick rule would mean that foods containing 15 grams or more would be identified as high in sugar.