

Consumer questionnaire on front-of-package nutrition labels

1. Which of the following best describes you?

consumer

2a. Do you support Health Canada's proposal to use a symbol to identify foods that are high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat? Please explain.

No. I believe the proposed front-of-package symbols add even more confusion for consumers. The current nutrition facts tables and ingredient listings clearly indicate the information required to make informed choice. Health Canada should devote more time and resources on what is already on labels instead of adding even more information that requires additional explanation.

2b. Which symbol would help you recognize foods high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat? Please explain.

None. I found all the symbols confusing as they are subjective and not informative. Some read as warning labels- like on bleach. I am also troubled by the fact the symbols imply all products carrying the label would contain all three of the nutrients- which is misleading for foods that may only have one of the nutrients).

2c. Do you think these foods should be exempt from front-of-package symbols even if they're high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat? Please explain.

I agree that some foods need to be exempt based on common sense. For example, a jar of honey only contains sugar- so saying that on the front is repetitive and not helpful to consumers. So single ingredient foods should be exempt from front-of-package symbols.

3. Do you think the proposed nutrient levels make sense to identify foods that are high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat? Please explain.

No. As I understand it, the proposed nutrient levels are based on subjective reviews of food intake questionnaires vs clinical studies. Words like "a lot" lack the very important context of serving size- information already available on the nutrition facts table. I encourage Health Canada to work with nutrition researchers to develop scientifically valid nutrient levels before making changes to proposed nutrient levels.

4. Do you support not allowing a 'no added sugars' claim on foods high in sugars? Please explain.

No. As a consumer, I want to know when a product has sugars added in manufacturing. There are some products, like honey and maple syrup, that are naturally high in sugar but also have additional vitamins, minerals and other health promoting components.

5a. Do you support that these sweeteners be declared in the list of ingredients only, rather than in the list of ingredients and the front of the package? Please explain.

Yes. Ingredients need to be on the ingredient list not front-of-package. The exception is if the product name is the ingredient name.

5b. If you are someone who either has PKU or cares for someone with PKU, what are your views concerning the front of the package and quantitative declaration labelling requirements for aspartame? Please explain.

I do not have PKU so will not comment. It would be better to treat this type of health-related concern the same way as Health Canada treats allergens- a call out on the ingredient list.

6. Do you have any other comments on Health Canada's approach to front-of-package nutrition labelling for foods that are high in sodium, sugars and/or saturated fat?

Consumers need to use the tools already available to them to make healthy choices. Adding subjective statements to front-of-package will require additional education and awareness.