

# Health Canada: Nutrition Labelling Initiatives and Sodium Reduction Strategy

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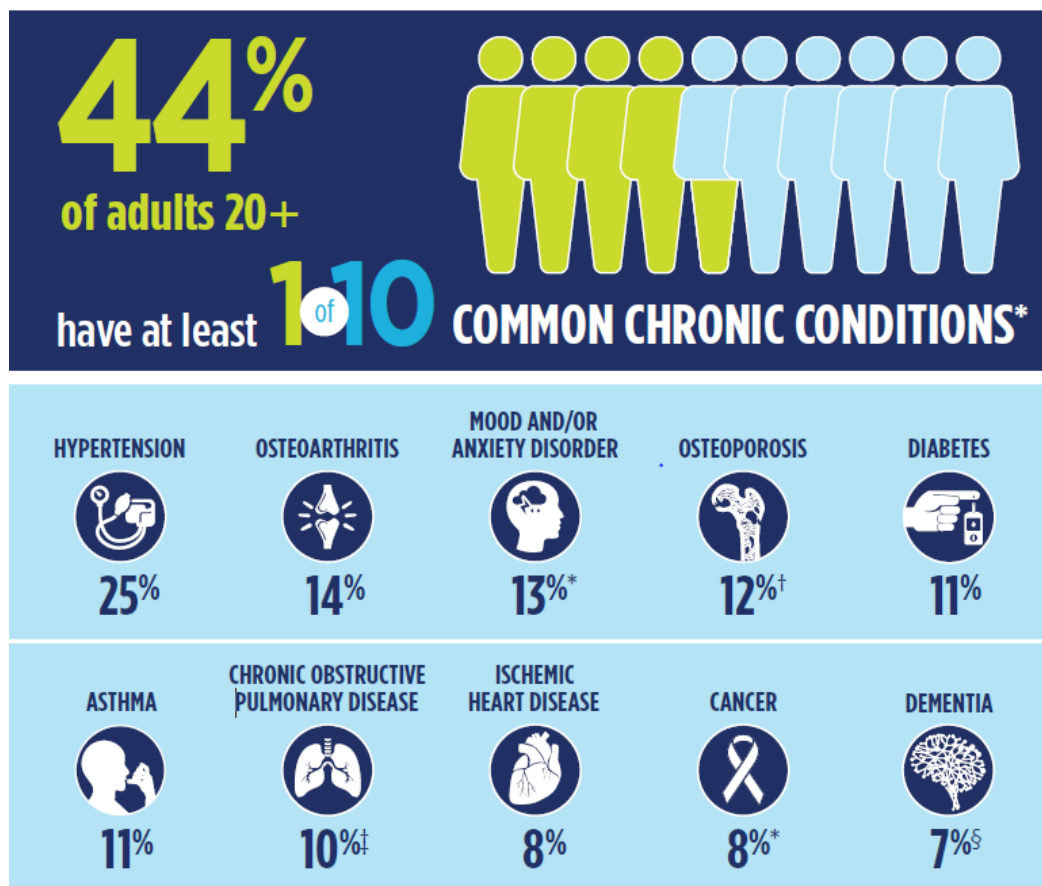
April 15, 2019



# Outline

- Introduction
- Health Eating Strategy Background
- Nutrition Labelling
- Front-of-Package Nutrition Labelling
- Sodium Reduction

# Prevalence of Chronic Diseases Among Canadian Adults



Public Health Agency of  
Canada publication, 2018

The science is clear that reducing consumption of foods high in salt, sugar, and saturated fat would directly address the burden of chronic disease

# Healthy Eating Strategy – Launched in October 2016

**Vision: Make the healthier choice the easier choice for all Canadians**

**Collaboration with other federal initiatives such as *A Food Policy for Canada***

## Better nutrition information



Revise the Food Guide  
Improve food labels  
Front-of-package nutrition labelling

## Improve food quality



Reduce sodium in food  
Prohibit industrial trans fat

## Protect vulnerable populations



Restrict the marketing of certain foods & beverages to children

## Support nutrition education



Support Nutrition North education initiatives

**Meaningful impacts on long-term health outcomes for Canadians**

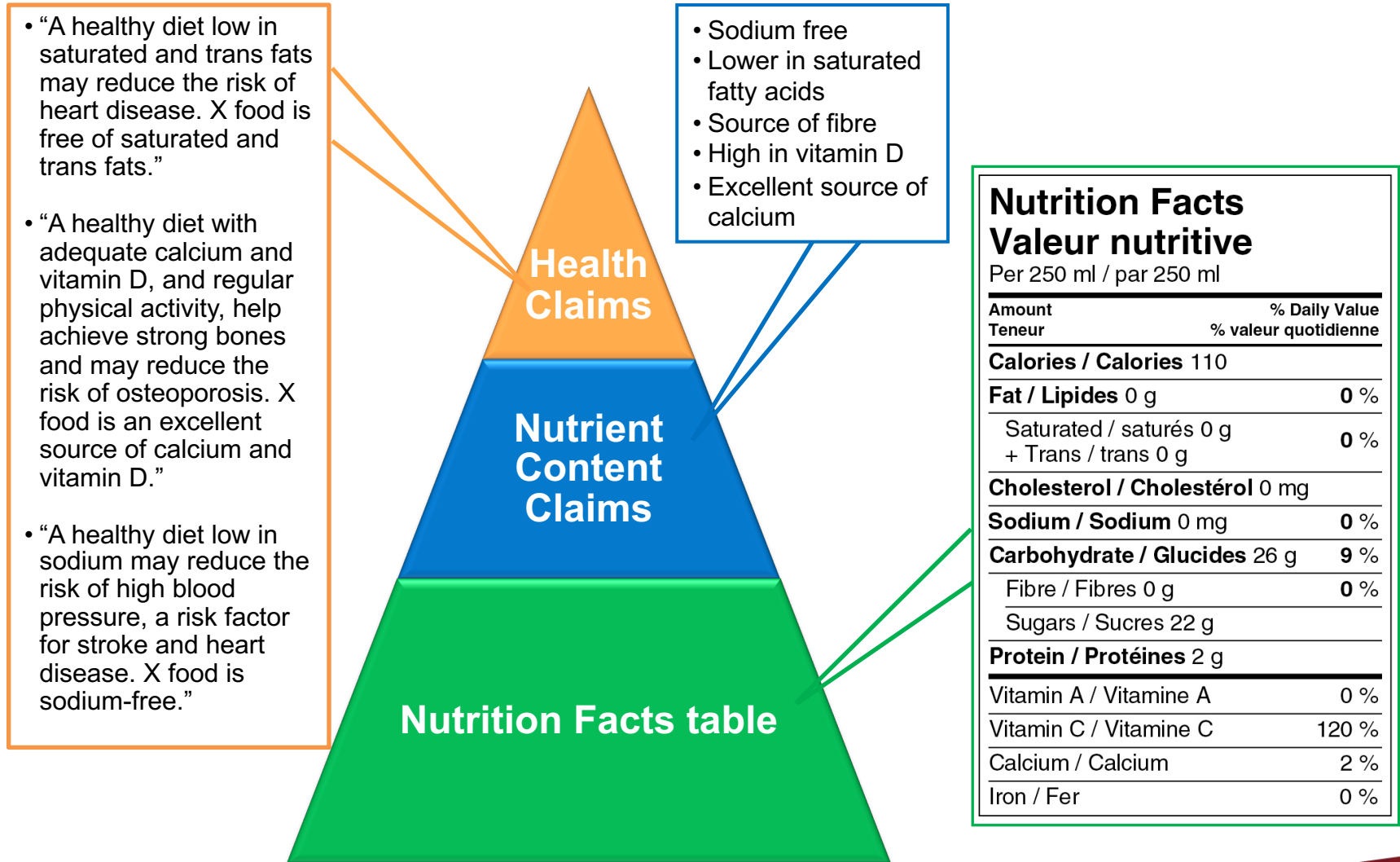
**Mutually-reinforcing initiatives developed using strong evidence and meaningful, open and transparent consultations**

## Healthy Eating Strategy – Significant Progress to Date

- ☑ **Improving nutrition labelling:** new requirements for the Nutrition Facts Table and list of ingredients were published on December 14, 2016
- ☑ **Banning industrial trans fat:** new prohibition came into force on September 17, 2018
- ☑ **Front-of-Package nutrition labelling:** *Canada Gazette, Part I* proposed regulations for mandatory front-of-package nutrition labelling on foods that are high in sodium, sugars, or saturated fat were consulted on between February 18 and April 26, 2018. Consumer consultation and research were also conducted
- ☑ **New Food Guide:** launched new resources and tools on January 22, 2019
- ☑ **Marketing to Kids:** Bill S-228 passed third reading in the House of Commons in Sept 2018

# Nutrition Labelling

# Three Types of Regulated Nutrition Information



# Updates to the Nutrition Facts Table

**ORIGINAL**

Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive	
Per 250 mL / par 250 mL	
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
<b>Calories / Calories 110</b>	
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g + Trans / trans 0 g	0 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	9 %
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 22 g	
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	0 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	120 %
Calcium / Calcium	2 %
Iron / Fer	0 %

**NEW**

Nutrition Facts Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL) pour 1 tasse (250 mL)	
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value* % valeur quotidienne*
<b>Calories 110</b>	
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g + Trans / trans 0 g	0 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 22 g	22 %
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Potassium 450 mg	10 %
Calcium 30 mg	2 %
Iron / Fer 0 mg	0 %

\*5% or less is a little, 15% or more is a lot  
\*5% ou moins c'est peu, 15% ou plus c'est beaucoup

Calories is larger and stands out more with bold line below →

Serving size stands out more and is more similar on similar foods ←

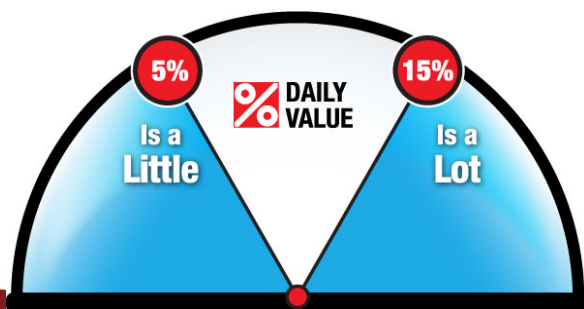
Daily Values updated ←

New % Daily Value for total sugars ←

mg amounts are shown [

Updated list of minerals of public health concern [

New % Daily Value footnote →



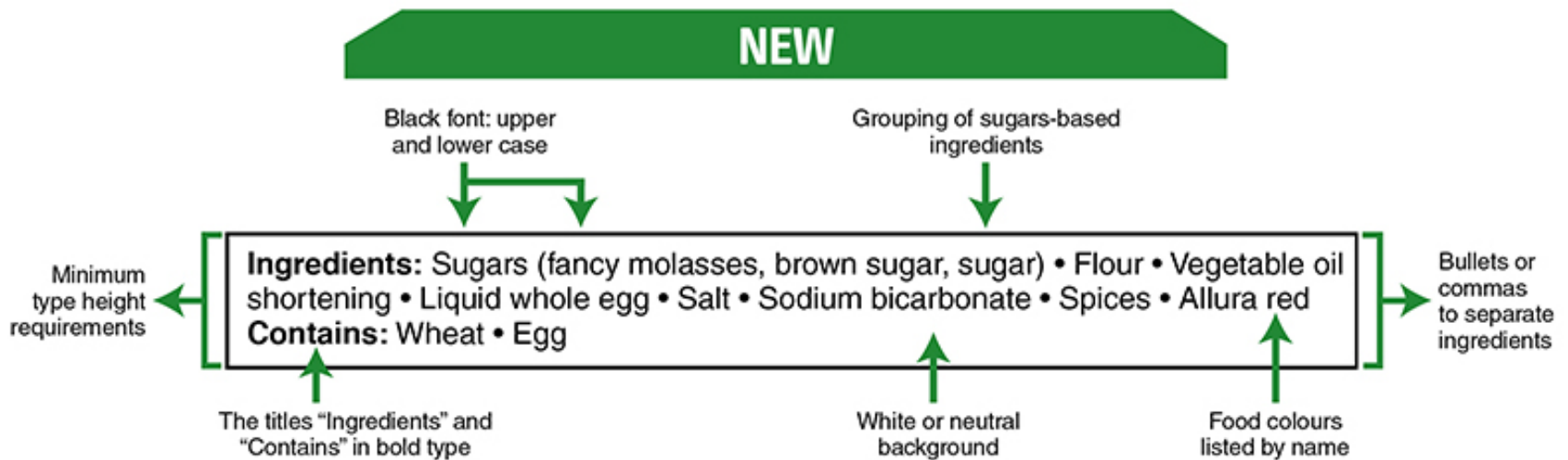
The % DV helps you see if a specific amount of food has a little or a lot of a nutrient.

**5% DV or less is a LITTLE**

**15% DV or more is a LOT**



# Updates to the List of Ingredients



# Nutrition Labelling Online Course Overview

## Nutrition Labelling

Home

### Welcome to the *Nutrition Labelling* online training course

This course is provided as a guideline for health professionals and educators who are an essential resource for current and accurate nutrition information for Canadians. It is designed to give health professionals and educators a solid foundation of knowledge about nutrition labelling, so they can more effectively inform clients/consumers.

This course contains 6 modules. Each module is designed to flow from one to the next; each building on material of the previous module. Use the Next button in the bottom right of the page to progress sequentially.

- Select each heading to review the descriptions for each module.
- Keyboard Instructions: The 'Right Arrow' key can also be used to navigate forward through the sections.

Module 1: Food Labelling in Canada

This module will provide you with a brief overview of food labelling in Canada.

Module 2: Nutrition Facts Table (NFT)

Module 3: A Closer Look at Serving Size Information

Module 4: A Closer Look at % Daily Value

Module 5: List of Ingredients

Module 6: Nutrition Claims

### Who is this course for?

The target audience includes, but is not limited to:

- Health professionals – Dietitians, Nurses, Doctors, Nutritionist, etc.
- Educators – elementary, secondary, and post-secondary educators, etc.

## TIMELINE

### Completed

- Course development
- Research Ethics Board approval

### Next Steps

- Pilot testing (online and focus groups) for spring 2019
- Analyze and implement results of pilot testing
- Launch free course by 2020

# Front-of-Package (FOP) Nutrition Labelling

# Current Nutrition Information: Useful but has Limitations

## Voluntary nutrient content & health claims

- Highlights positive attributes of a food
- Used as a marketing tool



## Mandatory Nutrition Facts table

- Location on side/back limits visibility when consumers are making choices
- Complexity makes it difficult for some consumers to understand
- Amount of detail can overwhelm some consumers

FOP labelling will complement existing nutrition information by providing simple and clear information on key nutrients linked to chronic diseases

# Front-of-Package Nutrition Labelling – Canada Gazette, Part I (CGI) Proposal

## Format Specifications

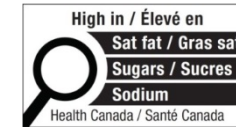
Consistent symbol location (top 25%)

Symbol size relative to front of package surface

Restrictions on placement and prominence of other health-related information



## Symbols



## Thresholds

- 15% DV for most foods
- 30% DV for main dishes
- 50 g adjustment for small servings

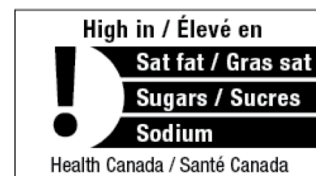
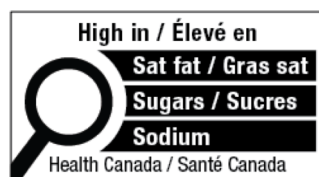


## Exemptions

- Already exempt from NfT
- Evidence for a protective effect on health
- FOP symbol redundant

# Front-of-Package Nutrition Labelling – Consultations 2018

- **Solicited feedback from all interested Canadians on the design of the proposed front-of package nutrition symbol**
  - Approximately 16,000 Canadians shared their views on the symbols



- **Formal consultation on the proposed regulations in *Canada Gazette, Part I***
  - Approximately 220 unique submissions received
- **Technical stakeholder workshop**
  - Discussed outstanding technical issues related to the design and implementation of the front-of-package nutrition symbol
  - Obtained expert recommendations on how to best address issues

# Front-of-Package Nutrition Labelling – Consumer Research

## **The objectives of the research were to:**

- Evaluate the efficacy of proposed FOP approach as quick and easy guidance for consumers of varying health literacy levels when making food choices;
- Evaluate and refine the proposed regulatory requirements (size, location, etc.)

## **Health Canada commissioned two high quality, scientific consumer research studies**

### **1. Retail food lab study**

- Naturalistic setting in a retail food lab designed to replicate a typical grocery shopping experience with currently available food products

### **2. Online mock package trial**

- An online survey with an embedded mock package trial

# Health Literacy in the Consumer Research Process

- Adaptation of a health literacy screening tool for use in the Canadian context

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/public-health-nutrition/article/canadian-adaptation-of-the-newest-vital-sign-a-health-literacy-assessment-tool/D95650EFC8248F075AB48F524BBC4493>



- Integrated health literacy into the recruitment process for the front-of-package nutrition labelling consumer research to ensure findings would be applicable to those Canadians disadvantaged by limited or marginal health literacy





# Health Literacy Assessment

## Newest Vital Sign (NVS)

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
Serving Size ½ cup (125 mL)			
Servings Per Container 4			
Amount per serving	% Daily Value*		
<b>Calories</b> 250			
<b>Fat</b> 13 g	<b>20 %</b>		
Saturated 9.0 g + Trans 0 g			
<b>Cholesterol</b> 28 mg			
<b>Sodium</b> 55 mg	<b>2 %</b>		
<b>Carbohydrate</b> 30 g	<b>10 %</b>		
Fibre 2 g <b>1 %</b>			
Sugars 23 g			
<b>Protein</b> 4 g			
Vitamin A	10 %	Vitamin C	0 %
Calcium	15 %	Iron	4 %
* Percentage Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.			
INGREDIENTS: Cream, Skim Milk, Liquid Sugar, Water, Egg Yolks, Brown Sugar, Milkfat, Peanut Oil, Sugar, Butter, Salt, Carrageenan, Vanilla Extract			

This Nutrition Facts label is on the back of a 500-mL container of ice cream.

1. If you eat the entire container of ice cream how many calories will you eat?
2. If you are allowed to eat 60 grams of carbohydrates as a snack, how much ice cream can you have?
3. Your doctor advises you to reduce the amount of saturated fat in your diet. You usually have 42 g of saturated fat each day, which includes one serving of ice cream. If you stop eating ice cream, how many grams of saturated fat would you be eating each day?
4. If you usually eat 2,500 calories in a day, what percentage of your daily value of calories will you be eating if you eat one serving?
5. Pretend that you are allergic to the following substances: penicillin, peanuts, latex gloves and bee stings. Is it safe for you to eat this ice cream?
6. Why not?

< 4 : at risk of marginal health literacy

≥ 4 : adequate literacy

# Consumer Research – Retail Food Lab Study



## Research Goals:

- To assess the efficacy of FOP labelling as a quick and easy guide for Canadians of varying health literacy levels to make healthier and more informed choices with respect to sugars, sodium, and saturated fats;
- To gain further insights into FOP symbol design elements that can contribute to effectiveness

## Methodology:

- Consumers (n=625) were randomized into current labelling or 1 of 4 different FOP symbol groups;
- Completed timed shopping tasks wearing an eye-tracking device followed by intercept interviews

## Results:

- Findings confirmed the potential of a “high in” FOP symbol in a naturalistic setting to discourage the purchase and consumption of foods high in nutrients of public health concern.

# Consumer Research – Online Mock Package Trial

Does **LOCATION** matter?  
Consistent symbol location (top 25%)



Does **PLACEMENT AND PROMINENCE** of voluntary nutrition claims and proprietary FOP systems matter?

Does **SIZE** matter?  
Symbol size relative to front of package surface



Does a **MANDATORY ATTRIBUTION** to Health Canada matter?

Leger (2018) Consumer research on front of package nutrition labeling: final report. Prepared for Health Canada. <http://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/200/301/pwgsc-tpsgc/por-ef/health/2018/073-17-e/report.pdf>

# What We Heard via CGI – Overall FOP Proposal

## Consumers

- Strongly supportive - will help them make healthier choices
- Attention-grabbing and intuitive
- Government-attributed symbols more useful, informative, and credible

## Health Stakeholders

- Strongly supportive of mandatory FOP
- Advocated for stronger measures in some key elements, such as symbol design, exemptions and use of claims
- Highlighted need for consumer research and education

## Industry

- Negative message on food, high costs, effectiveness, and trade impacts
- Mixed views on key elements of policy (nutrients, thresholds, format, exemptions)
- Supportive of four year transition period



# Symbols

## CGI proposal



## What was heard

- Health Canada's consumer research found that all four symbol designs were effective for making healthier choices
- The presence of the Health Canada attribution resulted in higher trust and credibility
- Some stakeholders preferred black symbols due to increased costs associated with printing colour



# Thresholds

## CGI proposal

### Most foods

- Foods at or above 15% Daily Value (DV) for sugars, sodium and saturated fat

### Main dishes

- 30% DV for sugars, sodium and saturated fat

### Foods consumed in small amounts

- 50 g basis adjustment and 15% DV threshold for small serving foods

## What was heard

- Stakeholders generally supported the 15% DV threshold (and the 30% for main dishes)
- Stakeholder views were mixed in terms of the approach used for foods consumed in small servings



# Format Specifications

## CGI proposal

- Symbol size is determined by the size of the package
- Symbol must be placed in the top 25% of the label
- Symbol must be attributed to Health Canada
- Other nutrition-related information limited to bottom 65% of label and limited type-size

## What was heard

- Mixed views on key elements of proposed format specifications
- Health Canada's consumer research showed that:
- proximity of other nutrition information had little effect on understanding and use of the symbol and
  - proposed specifications were effective in providing participants of varying health literacy levels with quick and easy guidance on foods high in nutrients of concern



# Exemptions

## CGI proposal

### Exemptions provided for:

- Foods not required to display a Nutrition Facts table:
  - foods sold at farmer's markets
- Foods that have a recognized health protection benefit:
  - Fruits & vegetables
  - Vegetable oils, nuts and seeds
  - Plain milk
  - Infant formulas
- Foods where the symbol would be redundant:
  - Salt, sweetening agents (e.g., sugar, maple syrup)

## What was heard

- Stakeholders were generally supportive of the proposed categories of exemptions
- Stakeholder views on the inclusion of redundancy exemptions were mixed
- Requests to expand the health protection and redundancy exemptions to include other foods



## Front-of-Package Nutrition Labelling – Moving Forward

- Publication of the final regulation in *Canada Gazette*, Part II in the near future to allow sufficient time for industry to implement
- Regulated parties would be given a transition period of 4 years to comply with the new regulations, as well as with other required label changes by Health Canada and the CFIA.
- The transition period for the 2016 nutrition labelling regulatory amendments would be extended to align with the end of the transition period for FOP.

# Sodium Reduction

# Sodium Reduction – Progress to Date

**2007**

Minister of Health established a Sodium Working Group

**2012**

Guidance for the Food Industry on Reducing Sodium in Processed Foods report release

**January 2018**

Sodium Reduction in Processed Foods in Canada report release



**2016**

**2017**

**2018**

**2010**

The Working Group published their recommendations for sodium reduction

**July 2018**

Sodium Intake of Canadians in 2017 report release

# Sodium Reduction in Processed Foods

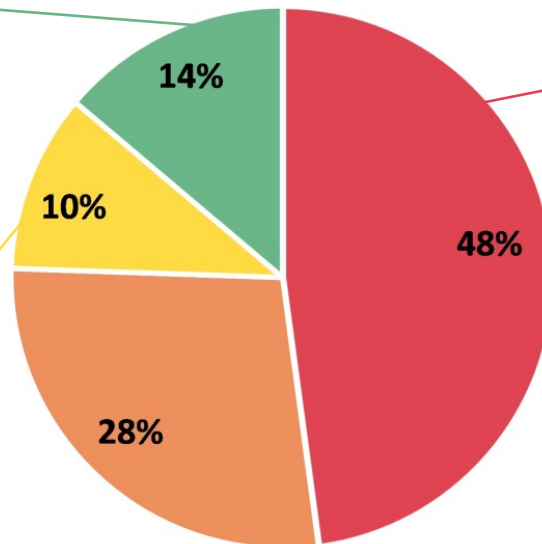
## For example:

- Cottage cheese
- Bacon bits
- Tomato paste
- Toddler mixed dishes

## For example:

- Cookies
- Ready-to-eat cereals
- Vegetable juices

**Figure 1. Results of 2017 Evaluation of Sodium Reduction in Processed Foods**



- Did not make progress
- Met the Phase I targets
- Met the Phase II targets
- Met the Phase III targets

## For example:

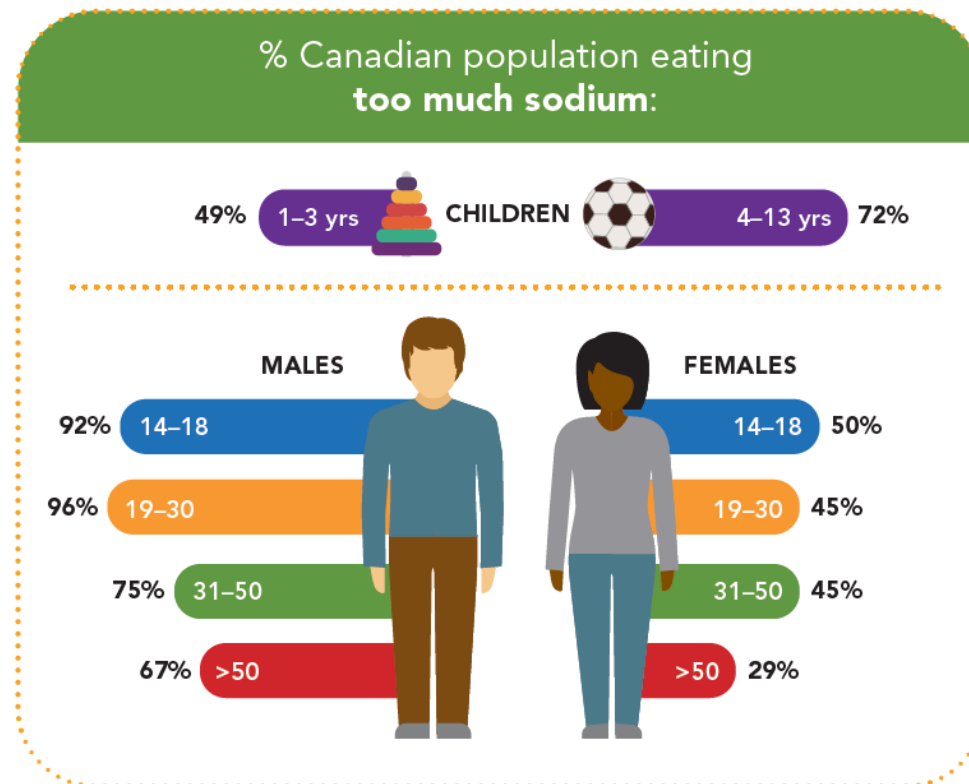
- Dry cured and fermented deli meats
- Refrigerated and frozen appetizers and entrees (>170 g)
- Frozen potatoes

## For example:

- Breads
- Crackers
- Hot instant cereals
- Canned vegetables and legumes

# Sodium Intake of Canadians in 2017 – Overall Results

- The average daily sodium intake of Canadians is 2760mg, which is higher than the established goal of 2300mg per day
- Sodium reduction in processed foods contributed an 8% reduction in intakes



# Sodium in Restaurant and Food Service Sectors

- **Canadians are eating out more frequently**, and when they do, they consume more sodium from foods prepared in restaurants and foodservices settings.
- Health Canada held a targeted online survey from September 20 to November 20, 2017 to collect information on sodium reduction in the foodservices sector.

**Next steps: Consult stakeholders on sodium reduction targets for the restaurant and foodservice sector**



The average restaurant meal item contains **1 DAY'S WORTH** of the recommended intake of sodium.<sup>3</sup>

## Sodium Reduction – Next Steps

- Continue to engage with stakeholders to gain a better understanding of opportunities and challenges in sodium reduction
- Develop sodium reduction targets for restaurants and foodservice industry
- Consult with stakeholders to refine sodium reduction targets and continue to monitor progress in sodium reduction
- Encourage the replacement of sodium-based additives with potassium-based additives through engagement with food industry
- Proposed front-of-package labelling to support sodium reduction through consumer awareness
- The publication of updated dietary reference intakes (DRIs) for sodium and potassium may have implications on policy work related to nutrition labelling and dietary guidance

## For More Information ...

- **Stakeholder Information Management System (CSIMS):**
  - Sign up for health consultations: <https://csims-sgici.hc-sc.gc.ca/csims/login.html>
  - Being used to share information on health topics and invite stakeholders to take part in consultations
- **Healthy Eating Strategy:** [Canada.ca/healthy-eating-strategy](https://Canada.ca/healthy-eating-strategy)
- **Food Labelling Changes:** [Canada.ca/food-labelling-changes](https://Canada.ca/food-labelling-changes)
- **Sodium in Canada:** [Canada.ca/sodium](https://Canada.ca/sodium)



**Thank you**