

Given the UK measures, do you have any initiatives aimed at reducing sugar in food and beverages, such as imposing a sugar levy on manufacturers, similar to what the UK has put in place on soda?

Can you describe any programs or initiatives you currently have under way, or are considering, to reduce the amount of sugar in beverages for Canadians, as well as any nutritional benchmarks or goals you may have outlined as part of these programs?

Health Canada acknowledges the high level of free sugar consumption among Canadians, particularly children and adolescents, and that sugary drinks, which include soft drinks, fruit juice and sweetened milks, coffees and teas, are the major source of free sugars in their diets. A recent study published by Health Canada found that Canadians consume approximately 12% of their total calories from free sugars, which is above the 10% limit set by the World Health Organization, and that 40% of Canadians' free sugars intake comes from sugary drinks.

Drinking sugary drinks may lead to increased risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes and cavities in children. Health Canada remains committed to the promotion of healthy eating, especially as the pandemic has made it more evident that diet-related chronic diseases are risk factors for infectious disease severity and mortality.

In October 2016, Health Canada launched the [Healthy Eating Strategy](#) to improve the food environment in Canada and make it easier for Canadians to make healthier food choices. The Strategy includes initiatives such as strengthening nutrition labelling and claims to help Canadians make healthier food choices, and revising Canada's Food Guide.

[New labelling measures](#) were introduced in December 2016, to help Canadians better understand the sugars content of their food and make informed purchase decisions. With these changes, which are scheduled to come into effect in December 2021, Canadians will be able to more easily determine the sources of sugars in their food and reduce their intake by using the % Daily Value (DV) for sugars and by looking at the list of ingredients. To help consumers better use the % DV, companies will be required to add a new footnote in the Nutrition Facts table explaining that 15% or more is a lot of a given nutrient. It is important to note that most foods that exceed the 15% DV threshold are foods that contain added sugars. Companies will also be required to group sugars-based ingredients together in the list of ingredients, in parentheses following the common name "sugars". This new measure, which is unique to Canadian food labels, will be a more transparent way of identifying sources of sugars added to the food.

The 2019 [Canada's food guide](#) (CFG) recommends that people limit consumption of highly processed foods, including sugary drinks. Canada's food guide recommends water as the beverage of choice to help reduce sugars intake. Canada's food guide also recommends that the majority of total sugars intake come from nutritious foods, such as intact or cut fruits and vegetables and unsweetened milks. Health Canada continues to develop new resources aimed at increasing food skills and cooking more often, such as recipes, videos and campaigns, to help Canadians apply the food guide recommendations in their daily lives.

Experts have suggested the voluntary sugar reduction program in the UK has also contributed to some companies reducing the sugar content in their sweetened beverages, beyond soda, and we wonder if Health Canada is considering something similar, to benefit Canadians well being?

Health Canada considers that the combination of the new labelling measures for sugars and the recent changes to Canada's food guide will be helpful by providing Canadians with the information needed to support a reduction in sugars intake.