

Nutrition labelling

Position Statement (Published: January 2019)

Why have we produced this position statement

- Clear and consistent nutrition labelling is important to people living with diabetes, those at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and the general public.
- At the moment, nutritional information is often confusing and inconsistent, or even absent in out-of-home settings.
- Everyone should be able to access quality nutritional information about their food wherever they eat and drink, so that they can make informed choices.
- People treating their diabetes with a basal/bolus insulin regime also require accurate information about the carbohydrate content of their food and drink in order to calculate and adjust their meal time (bolus) insulin doses.

How did we develop this position?

We reviewed national and international evidence on nutritional labelling. We also conducted focus groups in England, Scotland and Wales to gather the opinions of people living with diabetes. We conducted research through ComRes on the general public's opinions on food labelling and conducted our own survey with supporters.

What we say about this position

Government and the food industry both need to take urgent action to improve provision of nutritional information, in and out of the home.

Recommendations for government

- UK government should legislate to make front of pack traffic light labelling mandatory if this becomes possible after Brexit.

- If changes to our relationship to the EU do not enable the UK to make front-of-pack labelling mandatory, action should be taken to encourage industry to adopt FOP voluntarily.
- Guidance on the back-of-pack labelling system should be improved to help ensure labels are more consistent. Carbohydrates should be displayed both per serving and per 100g. There should be a consistent approach to whether these values apply to the product as sold or as prepared.
- The government should make recommendations as to the best way to clearly and consistently display information on free sugars. They should also take action to increase the understanding of the difference between total sugars and free sugars amongst the general public.
- Government should fulfill commitments in chapter 2 of the Childhood Obesity Plan to introduce mandatory calorie labelling at the point of choice in the out-of-home sector. Calorie labels should be easy to read and difficult to miss.
- This legislation should cover businesses of all sizes, and should apply to all the food and drink they sell.
- Information should also be displayed on menus showing an explanation of the daily recommended intake of calories for an adult woman, in order to contextualize the figures for individual dishes.
- In addition, legislation should ensure that full nutritional information is provided for all products sold in an out-of-home setting. This information should be available both in store and online, with traffic-light colour coding applied to fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt.
- Government should supply tools, or make specific recommendations for commercial tools, that businesses can use to calculate calorie and other nutritional information for their food.

Recommendations for the food industry

- Retail stores and food manufacturers should take urgent action to ensure that all their products display front-of-pack traffic light labelling.
- In the out-of-home sector, restaurants, cafes and takeaways should urgently act to:
 - adopt calorie-labelling on menus or at the point of choice for all their products,

- provide clear information on the carbohydrate content of all their products both in store and online
- provide information on the fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt content of their food and drink, both in store and online, using the traffic-light colour coding system.

Evidence and analysis - the reasons why we are saying what we do

Front of pack labelling

- The UK' s voluntary front-of-pack labelling scheme was introduced in 2013, with the aim of providing consumers with clear and consistent nutritional information and enabling them to balance their diet and control their energy intake¹.
- Evidence shows that the labelling system is valuable to consumers².
- Information from retailers has shown that purchases of healthier-labelled products increased and sales of less-healthy products decreased following introduction of FOP colour-coded labelling³
- The UK' s current front-of-pack traffic light labelling system is popular with the public – 83% of British adults say the UK government should require by law that the food and drink industry include traffic light labelling on all food and drink packaging⁴.
- Eighty-seven per cent agreed that traffic-light labelling helps people make informed choices about the food they buy⁵.

Out-of-home labelling

- A 2018 Cochrane review found that nutritional labelling comprising energy information on menus may reduce energy purchased in restaurants⁶.
- According to one meta-analysis, the inclusion of contextual and interpretative information in out-of-home settings, for example daily recommended calorie intake, led to a statistically significant difference in calories selected and consumed⁷.

- In the UK, over a quarter of adults and one fifth of children eat food from out-of-home outlets at least once a week⁸. These foods tend to be higher in energy intake, fat, sugar and salt⁹.
- Out-of-home calorie labelling is popular with the public – 76% of British adults agree that cafes and restaurants should display calorie information on their menus so that customers are informed about the calorie content of the food and drinks they buy¹⁰.

References

¹ Department of Health (2013), Front of Pack nutrition label guidance, Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/566251/FoP_Nutrition_labelling_UK_guidance.pdf

² CE Hodgkins, MM Raats, C Fife-Schaw at al (2015), Guiding healthier food choice: systematic comparison of four front-of-pack labelling systems and their effect on judgements of product healthiness, *British Journal of Nutrition*, 113(10); pp 1652-1663

³ The House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee, Behaviour Change (2nd report of session 2010-12), published July 2011, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201012/ldselect/ldsctech/179/179.pdf>

⁴ ComRes interviewed 2,121 UK adults aged 18+ between 12th and 14th January 2018. Data were weighted to be demographically representative of all UK adults by age, gender, region and social grade.

⁵ ComRes interviewed 2,121 UK adults aged 18+ between 12th and 14th January 2018. Data were weighted to be demographically representative of all UK adults by age, gender, region and social grade.

⁶ R A Crockett, S E King, T M Marteau, Nutrition labelling for healthier food or non-alcoholic drink purchasing consumption, *Cochrane Library*, February 2018

⁷ SE Sinclair, M Cooper, E D Mansfield, The Influence of Menu Labeling on Calories Selected or Consumed: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis, *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*, September 2014 Volume 114, Issue 9, Pages 1375–1388.e15

⁸ Public Health England, Health matters: obesity and the food environment, 2017

⁹ A Jaworowska, T Blackham, L Stevenson, Determination of salt content in hot takeaway meals in the United Kingdom, *Appetite* 2012: Oct;59(2)517-22

¹⁰ ComRes interviewed 2,121 UK adults aged 18+ between 12th and 14th January 2018. Data were weighted to be demographically representative of all UK adults by age, gender, region and social grade.