



Navigating the New Labels: A Dietitian's Guide to Front-of- Package Labelling in Canada

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



In partnership with:



**The Original
Wellness Drink.™**

JUNE 2025

CANADA'S NEW FOP LABELS AT-A-GLANCE

New nutrition symbols are coming to food packaging in Canada — are you ready?

Canada is changing nutrition labelling on food packages. Here's what you need to know about the new rules, how dietitians can play a key role in supporting informed choices, and how to communicate the changes so clients can feel confident navigating food labels in line with their personal health goals.

What Dietitians Need to Know



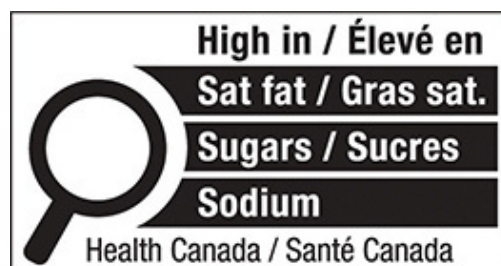
The Purpose

The new front-of-package (FOP) nutrition symbols will help Canadians identify prepackaged foods that are high in saturated fat, sugars, and/or sodium. These symbols aim to support informed choices and reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Canadians can use them to make quick comparisons between products within the same category, such as cereal and soup.



The Symbol

The new label features a magnifying glass and the phrase "High in [Sat fat/Sugars/Sodium]." It will appear on the package's front panel and must meet specific size requirements for easy visibility.





The Criteria

The new label applies to most prepackaged foods. There are health related, practical and technical exemptions. Some exemptions include whole fruits and vegetables, plain milk and yogurt, raw meats, food sold at farmer's markets, very small packages (e.g., mini chocolate bars), and packaged individual portions meant to be served at restaurants (e.g., individual creamers).

The FOP nutrition symbol is required for foods that exceed set limits (thresholds) for saturated fat, sugars, and/or sodium—based on a percentage of the Daily Value (DV) per serving or reference amount, whichever is larger. Thresholds vary by food category and serving size (see box).

When Do Prepackaged Foods Require a Front-of-Package Label?



Foods must display the new symbol if they meet or exceed these thresholds for saturated fat, sugars, and/or sodium per reference amount or serving:

- **General foods** (e.g., soup, deli meats): $\geq 15\%$ DV
- **Small servings (≤ 30 g/mL)** (e.g., cookies, pickles): $\geq 10\%$ DV
- **Main dishes (≥ 200 g)** (e.g., pizza, frozen meals): $\geq 30\%$ DV
For dishes specifically intended for kids aged 1–4, the main dish reference amount is 170 g.



The Timeline

The new symbol is mandatory for qualifying products by January 1, 2026.

Manufacturers may choose to add it to products earlier, like this ice cream that started displaying the label in 2024.



The Impact

It is anticipated that upwards of 65% of the foods in grocery stores will be required to display the FOP symbol.

PMID: 36203128

Label Refresher

Most food labels must include a Nutrition Facts table and a list of ingredients. You may also find nutrition claims and the FOP nutrition symbol.

And to learn more about the FOP symbols, the research behind them, and how they are applied, visit [Health Canada's website](https://www.healthcanada.ca).



FOP LABELS: PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

FOP Labels Are Just One Tool

FOP food labels are being touted as a tool to help people make quick and informed choices, but dietitians know food decisions should be based on more than just the presence of saturated fat, sodium, and sugars.

Labels are a helpful tool, but lasting health comes from sustainable, enjoyable changes to overall eating patterns. Our role as dietitians is to support people to make informed, personalized food choices that fit with their health goals, preferences, and lifestyle.



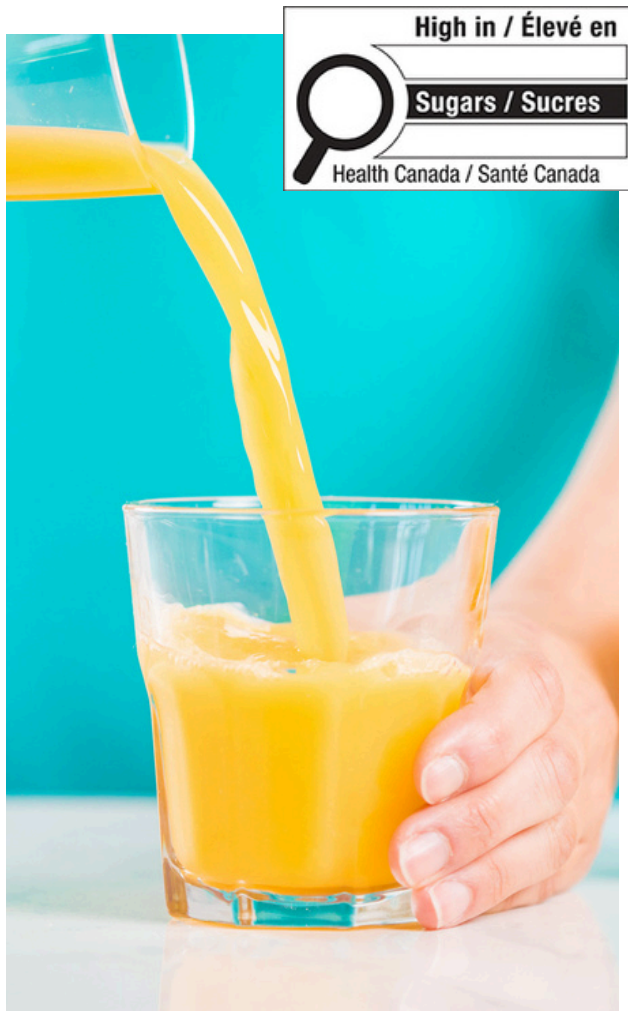
An Opportunity to Engage

As FOP labels roll out across Canada, dietitians have a powerful opportunity to lead—not just by explaining what the symbols mean, but by helping people to use them alongside the Nutrition Facts table and ingredient list to get the full picture of what a food offers.

We can guide clients to look beyond the FOP labels and consider the whole food—how much saturated fat, sugars, or sodium it provides, as well as what beneficial nutrients it provides (like fibre or potassium), and whether the food fits into their overall eating pattern.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

Let's look at a couple of examples that showcase why considering a food's whole nutrition profile is important.



Example 1:

Florida Orange Juice

Florida Orange Juice may be labelled as “high in sugars,” even though all the sugar comes naturally from the fruit — nothing is added. This could be confusing and may lead some consumers to wrongly assume that 100% orange juice is no better than a sugary drink with the same symbol.

Yet, one 8-ounce serving (250 mL) of 100% orange juice* also provides:

- ✓ **Excellent source** of vitamin C
- ✓ **Good source** of folate
- ✓ **Good source** of potassium

*Source: USDA FoodData Central; Nutrient content may vary by brand.

Client Perspective

For some of our clients, 100% orange juice in appropriate portions can support health and wellness as part of a balanced diet. For example, a vegetarian teen girl with low iron who resists eating fruits and vegetables at breakfast may benefit from an appropriate portion of 100% orange juice to enhance non-heme iron absorption from her iron-fortified cereal.





Example 2: Pea Soup

Many soups may get labelled as “high in sodium,” but they may also provide beneficial nutrients. Take a look at this pea soup label. Notice that it provides protein, fibre, and iron. And the ingredient list is simple, with eight basic ingredients, including yellow peas as the second ingredient.

A 1-cup serving (250 mL) of this soup* provides 8 grams of plant-based protein plus:

- ✓ **Very high source** of fibre
- ✓ **Source** of iron
- ✓ **Good source** of potassium

*Source: manufacturer information

Client Perspective

For some seniors, canned soup is a convenient, affordable, and comforting choice.

For example, an older adult without sodium restrictions who isn’t likely to cook from scratch for every meal could use canned soup to help meet their protein, fibre, and iron needs. When balanced with other homemade meals and lower-sodium choices, canned soup may be part of a healthy eating pattern.



COMMUNICATING WITH CLIENTS ABOUT FOP LABELS

Food should support health and bring joy.

As dietitians, our strength lies in helping Canadians to cut through confusion, avoid food fear, and make choices that align with their unique lifestyle and health goals — because there's no one-size-fits-all path to health.

Top 3 Tips to Share with Clients:

1 Use the symbol as a tool, not a rule.

- The new **FOP symbol** helps consumers to easily identify nutrients of concern, but it doesn't tell the whole story.

2 Read beyond the front-of-package symbol.

- Use the **Nutrition Facts table** to assess the amounts of the nutrients of concern and other nutrients that the food provides, to see the whole picture.
- Look for **nutrient claims** and check the **ingredients list** to identify sources of nutrients, such as sugars, and see how much added sugar is in the food compared to other ingredients.

3 Focus on your personal nutrition goals.

- A product marked “High in sugars” may still fit into a balanced diet, depending on your health goals, preferences, and cultural context. Choose foods that support your health and bring you joy.