



Nutrition labelling on menus

Eating out is now a part of the Australian lifestyle. There is an increasing trend to eat away from home, portion sizes and energy* (kilojoule) content of meals and snacks have grown, and nutrition information is lacking at most restaurants.

In response to this, the Heart Foundation is calling for mandatory nutrition labelling on menus in cafés, quick service (fast food) restaurants and snack food outlets.

The Heart Foundation has reviewed key menu labelling studies and acknowledges the evidence is still developing. However, we recommend that governments take the below actions to start improving nutritional knowledge and food choices for all Australians who eat out.

The Heart Foundation calls for state, territory and federal governments to:

- legislate and enforce mandatory nutrition labelling on menus and menu boards* at point-of-purchase*
- fund and run an education campaign to help Australians understand what menu labelling means and how to use it to choose healthier foods
- monitor and evaluate the menu labelling initiative to determine efficacy in Australia
- fund and/or support further research to build evidence for future action, as identified by the Heart Foundation.

Specifically, mandatory nutrition labelling on menus and menu boards should:

- apply to cafés (café/coffee chain outlets, including independent stores and bakery chains), fast food/quick service restaurants (fast food chain stores and independent fast food outlets) and snack food outlets (snack food chain stores, ice cream chain stores and juice bars) with 20 or more sites and standard menu items*
- label energy* (kilojoule) per serve as a minimum and saturated fat and sodium/salt per serve optimally, and refer to daily intake* of kilojoules
- provide nutrition information next to the menu item, at the point-of-purchase, in a format that makes sure consumers have the best chance of seeing the information
- provide a full nutrition information panel* for all standard food items in onsite brochures or posters that consumers can easily find and read.

Governments should also support food industry to provide a greater number of menu options that contain more fibre and less energy (kilojoule), saturated and trans fats and sodium/salt. This can be achieved through food and recipe reformulation, and by using healthier ingredients and cooking methods.

For more information or to read the full rapid review *The need for nutrition labelling on menus*, visit www.heartfoundation.org.au/sites/healthyating/healthprofessionals/pages/default.aspx.

*Definitions

Daily intake	Nutrition information relating to daily intake for nutrients. ¹ Reference value for energy is 8,700 kJ.
Energy	The foods we eat provide energy, which is measured in kilojoules or calories. 4.184 kilojoules = 4,184 joules = 1 calorie
Menu/Menu board	The list of food choices from which a consumer chooses what to order.
Nutrition information panel	Mandatory panel on all food packages that contains minimum nutrition information as specified by Food Standards Australia and New Zealand. ¹
Point-of-purchase	Place where a product is purchased, usually at the cash register.
Standard menu item	Food item that is listed on a menu or menu board for more than 90 days per calendar year. Daily specials, custom orders and menu items that appear on the menu for less than 90 days per calendar year are not standard menu items. ²

1. Food Standards Australia and New Zealand. FSANZ Code, Standard 1.2.8.
2. Food and Drug Administration. Disclosure of Nutrient Content Information for Standard Menu Items Offered for Sale at Chain Restaurants or Similar Retail Food Establishments and for Articles of Food Sold From Vending Machines. Docket No. FDA-2010-N-0298. Food and Drug Administration, Department of Health and Human Services 2010. Available from <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2010/2010-16303.htm>. Accessed 16 August 2010.

For heart health information
1300 36 27 87
www.heartfoundation.org.au

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