

FDA Updates “Healthy” Nutrient Content Claim for Food

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FDA issued a final rule today updating the requirements food must meet to be marketed as “healthy.” FDA says that a “healthy” claim “implies that the nutrient content of the food may help consumers maintain healthy dietary practices,” and an update was necessary to ensure that foods described as healthy are consistent with current nutrition science, which has evolved significantly since the last update to the rule in 1994. FDA’s changes to the rule seek to “provide additional flexibility, which will result in more foods qualifying to bear the ‘healthy’ claim.”

FDA made a number of changes in this update, but we highlight the notable ones.

- Consistent with the previous requirements for healthy food, the new rule establishes limits on saturated fat and sodium. Instead of limiting total fat and dietary cholesterol, the rule now replaces saturated fat with unsaturated fat, and it includes limits on added sugars.
- The new rule requires that food contain a meaningful amount of food groups and sub-groups, like vegetables, fruits, dairy, protein, and whole grains that individually contain an array of nutrients, rather than focusing on the individual nutrients, themselves. Current nutrition science suggests that “focusing on food groups better reflects the overall nutrient content of a food rather than focusing on one individual beneficial nutrient in isolation.”

Foods that qualified under the previous rule, such as yogurt high in added sugars and fortified foods like breakfast cereal, white bread, and fruit punch, will no longer qualify. The new rule includes foods such as fresh whole fruits and vegetables, salmon, plain low-fat or fat-free yogurt, eggs, 100% olive oil, and water.

Stay tuned as FDA is also considering the use of a “healthy” symbol manufacturers could apply to labeling to denote food that meets the “healthy” definition.

FDA’s new requirements for “healthy” claims are part of the broader push to curb diet-related chronic diseases like cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity, and are aligned with the Biden-Harris Administration’s National Strategy on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health ([here](#)). For specific questions on the new requirements, please reach out to [Donnelly McDowell](#) or [Katie Rogers](#).