

Why You Should Avoid These 6 Foods Loaded With Extra Sugar

The government's new food labels, which target how much added sugar packaged foods contain, is an "exciting" change that should help consumers make healthier choices, a top nutrition expert says.

"The exciting news in the government's new labeling is the one involving added sugars. This is a great step forward in helping consumers make smart decisions," Dr. Charles Platkin tells *Newsmax Health*.

The newly revised "Nutrition Facts" label was unveiled last week by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Most food manufacturers will have two years to comply to these final changes while those with less than \$10 million in annual food sales will have three years to make the changes. Foods imported to the U.S. will also have to meet the requirements.

The new labeling incorporates other changes as well, such as putting calorie information in larger letters and revising portion size to come into line with how much people actually consume, like changing $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of ice cream to $\frac{2}{3}$ of a cup, and increasing the average serving of soda from 12 to 20 ounces.

Surveys show that the vast majority of foods Americans eat are manufactured, which is also known as processed or packaged foods. The labeling was last updated in 2014, but did not include the added sugars designation, which many industry groups, including the sugar and beverage lobbies, have been fighting.

Added sugars are sweeteners added to foods or beverages during processing, but they do not include naturally occurring sugars such as those in milk and fruits. The FDA recommends that people consume no more than 10 percent of their total daily

calories from added sugar. The new labeling will include those percentage figures as well.

“The fact that it will now be easy to discern how much of a product is comprised of added sugars is fantastic. It’s not healthy and a lot of people need to stay away from it,” says Platkin, director of the New York City Food Policy at Hunter College. “If someone is trying to avoid obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other ailments, they need to know this information so they can make decisions,” he added.

Discerning the actual amount of sugar in processed foods is especially difficult because sweeteners go by so many names. Among them: corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrin, dextrose, glucose, fructose, honey, invert sugar, lactose, maltodextrin, maltose, mannitol, molasses, natural sweeteners, polydextrose, sucrose, syrup, turbinado sugar and xylitol.

“The goal of a nutritional label should be to make information clear enough so that you don’t need someone like me with a Ph.D. to interpret food choices. It’s crazy how much effort it takes to understand information just about what you’re eating,” says Platkin, who writes a syndicated column called “Diet Detective.”

Since the labels won’t be appearing soon, here are Platkin’s suggestions on foods to stay away from now:

- **Sugared cereals.** There are a lot of cereals that are healthy, but there are lots of sugary ones as well, says Platkin, whose “cereal investigation” survey ranked products in terms of added sugar.
- **Flavored yogurts.** Yogurt can be a health food, but some contain a variety of flavors and add-ons and that usually means more sugar. While some will turn up on the “healthiest” labels, others have added sugar counts that will put them more in the dessert category, rather than

healthy snack.

- **Granola, cereal, high-fiber, and other types of bars.** Some snack bars are healthy choices, with just a sprinkling of natural ingredients for added flavor. But others are loaded with so much sugar and sweeteners they are basically candy bars masquerading as healthy choices.
 - **Sweets, cakes, candy and pies.** Obviously, treats like these are packed with sugar, but the new labeling will help show which choices might be wiser for those who want to indulge in moderation.
 - **Soda.** The fact that soda has added sugar probably won't come as a surprise, but the new labels will underscore just how much sugar is added, especially in the larger more realistic size that most people drink.
 - **Salad dressings, ketchups and sauces.** Some salad dressings and sauces, like pasta or barbecue sauce, contain added sugars, while others don't, so the new labels will make choosing healthier options easier.
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