

Recommendations set out for food industry to reduce sugar

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Credit: Cancer Research UK

New voluntary guidelines have been released to help reduce the amount of sugar in foods eaten by children by 2020.

Public Health England (PHE) has set recommended sugar limits for 9 foods, including biscuits, breakfast cereals and yogurt.

Its aim is to reduce the amount of sugar [children](#) eat from these foods by at least 20% by 2020, including a 5% reduction in the first year of the programme.

The [health](#) body also set out plans for how the [food industry](#) could meet these targets.

The guidance follows previous challenges to all sectors of the food and drinks industry to reduce the amount of sugar in a range of products that contribute most to children's [sugar intake](#).

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's Director for Cancer Prevention, said that excess sugar can lead to obesity, which has a major impact on [cancer](#) risk in later life.

"Without action, the problem is only going to get worse, so it's vital this new programme works towards the goal of slashing the amount of sugar hidden in our food," she said.

But this won't happen unless the [food industry](#) acts now to meet these targets, added Cox.

PHE recommends 3 ways to reduce the amount of sugar in processed food:

1. Change recipes to lower sugar levels
2. Reduce [portion sizes](#) and calories of single serving products
3. Shift people towards buying lower/no added sugar products

"If industry can't make this work, the NHS will struggle to deal with the obesity crisis we're hurtling towards," said Cox. "But this doesn't have to be the case and we can't afford to get this wrong. We hope to see companies cutting down on sugar and portion sizes over the coming

years to play their part in improving our health."

According to the plan, sugar intake is higher than advised across the population. But this is particularly true for children, who eat on average more than double the maximum recommended amount, leading to obesity and health issues in later life.

"Overweight and obese children are likely to carry this health problem into adulthood, increasing their risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers," said Dr Alison Tedstone, PHE's chief nutritionist.

"Levels of obesity are higher in children from deprived backgrounds. Tackling the amount of sugar we eat is not just a healthy thing to do, but an issue of inequality for many families."

She added that 200,000 tonnes of sugar could be removed from the UK market per year by 2020 if the targets are met.

PHE will publish reports in 2018 and 2020 to measure progress in reaching the 5% and 20% reduction targets.

"These guidelines are an important opportunity for industry to play their part in preventing people from developing cancers," said Cox. "We believe a 20% cut in [sugar](#) by 2020 is both achievable and powerful."

More information: Sugar reduction: Achieving the 20%:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-achieving-the-20

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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