



Public Health Groups Welcome Launch of Health Star Rating

Public Health Groups today welcomed the launch of the Government's new Health Star Rating system which rates the healthiness of foods using a simple front of pack device.

Dr Erin Lalor, CEO of the National Stroke Foundation and Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, congratulated Assistant Health Minister Fiona Nash on the successful introduction of the scheme and said "Consumers will now be able to compare products through clear, accurate and trustworthy information in an easy-to-understand format, which is readily found on the front of packs." She added that "the stars will help drive food companies to reformulate their products, reducing salt, saturated fat and the sugar content of food and increasing inclusion of healthier ingredients".

The Health Star Rating system has been developed by government in consultation with consumer, industry and public health groups over the last 2 years. It features important details about salt, sugar and saturated fat as well as a rating out of five stars, providing an at-a-glance rating to save consumers time when shopping for the healthiest items. The system assigns stars according to the amount of energy, saturated fat, sugars and salt in packaged foods, with a simple 'the more stars the healthier' approach. Foods can receive a rating of between half to five stars, with five star foods being the healthiest packaged foods.

This initiative is critical to the health of Australians because chronic disease is Australia's biggest health challenge, causing 90% of all deaths and 85% of the burden of disease. Dietary risk factors are the leading contributing factor to the burden of disease, followed closely by high body mass.

Professor Greg Johnson, CEO of Diabetes Australia, who was on the Project Committee overseeing the development of the Health Star Rating said "with the rising tide of obesity sweeping this country, and its impact on chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular disease, it is vital that consumers are supported in making healthier food choices".

Professor Johnson added "Robust food labelling is an important part of a comprehensive approach to addressing dietary risk factors - but we also need to see other strategies put in place to complement it, including a national food reformulation program, education campaigns and restrictions on junk food advertising to children".

Dr Lalor said "Although we are encouraged that several leading food industry companies have signed up for the system so far, we will be closely monitoring the evaluation of the system in 2016 to make sure it appears on a fair cross section of foods to allow consumers to make healthier choices".

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA) is an alliance of the five leading health NGOs (National Stroke Foundation, Diabetes Australia, Cancer Council Australia, Kidney Health Australia and the National Heart Foundation), working together to prevent chronic disease.

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