



Media contact: Rebecca Cook - 0438 316 435

Breakfast cereals up to one third sugar: new analysis shows

Health groups call for clear labelling

Australian cereal manufacturers are potentially misleading consumers by promoting health claims on their packaging despite sugar making up more than 35% of the ingredients of some popular brands, a recent survey has revealed.

The Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) analysed the labels of 20 popular breakfast cereals and found that the majority of products carried healthy sounding claims such as a 'source of fibre', '69% wholegrain' and 'no artificial flavours' – though some contained more than one third sugar.

Jane Martin, Executive Manager of the OPC, believes consumers deserve the right to a clearer picture about what they are eating and the Coalition is urging all cereal manufacturers to adopt Australia's voluntary Health Star Rating labelling system,

Ms Martin says: "For example, many breakfast cereals contain high levels of sugar, but manufacturers use all sorts of creative phrases on their labels to give consumers the impression they're a nutritious choice for breakfast. It's as though they are prepared to tell consumers only half the story.

"Many parents would be horrified to learn that for every three mouthfuls of Nutri-Grain, one is just sugar, while a small bowl contains twice as much sodium as a small packet of chips.

"The Health Star Rating System was introduced more than a year ago to help consumers compare the overall nutritional quality of products at a glance. The system helps consumers better understand a product's overall health rating so they can make informed choices, but our research has revealed very few cereals, as yet, carry the star label," Ms Martin says.

"Clearer labelling through such a system is a vital step in helping consumers make healthier choices in an environment where approximately 63% of Australian adults and 25% of Australian children are overweight or obese.

"Nutrition panels can also provide helpful information if people know what the information means. When it comes to sugar, for example, knowing foods containing over 15 grams of sugar per 100 grams are considered 'high' in sugar helps people decide whether that's a product they want to eat. Similarly for salt, a product with over 400mg of sodium per 100 grams is considered high in salt.

"Another thing for consumers to be aware of is that currently it is not possible to distinguish between 'added sugars' and sugars derived from natural

Media release



sources, such as dried fruit. It would be great to see this disclosed by manufacturers.

“We commend those companies who have already incorporated the voluntary Star Rating System on their packaging including Sanitarium, Uncle Tobys, Coles and Woolworths,” said Ms Martin.



Cereal offenders – What’s hiding in your cereal?

- Average sugar content of all 20 cereals analysed was 19.8g per 100g – that’s almost 20 per cent sugar. This equates to about 5 teaspoons of sugar.
- Cereals with front-of-pack health claims that also contain high levels of sugar include Kellogg’s Coco Pops (36.5g per 100g) , Kellogg’s Nutri Grain, Kellogg’s Just Right (28.7g) and Uncle Toby’s Fruity Bites Wild Berry (24.8g).
- The cereals with the most sugar were Kellogg’s Frosties (41.3g per 100g), Kellogg’s Froot Loops (38g) and Kellogg’s Coco Pops (36.5g) – all of which are heavily promoted to children.
- Top 5 cereal brands sold in supermarkets by value (according to Retail World, December 2014) are: Weetbix, Nutri-Grain, Uncle Toby’s Plus, Coco Pops, and Special K.

Survey Results: front-of-pack claims made by 10 popular children’s breakfast cereals:

Cereal product	Any health claims / nutrition content claims on the pack? E.g. ‘source of calcium’ ‘fibre’ etc?	Sugar per 100g (g)	Teaspoons of sugar per 100 grams	Sodium per 100g (mg)
Coco Pops	“Nutritious grains of puffed rice with cocoa”	36.5	9	465
Fruit Loops	“No artificial flavours No artificial colours”	38	9.5	400
Frosties	no	41.3	10	320
Nutri Grain	“Iron man fuel. Made with corn, oats and wheat”.	32	8	600
Cheerios	“69% wholegrain. No artificial colours or flavours”.	19.9	5	300
Cornflakes	“Contains Vitamin C, Iron and Zinc”.	8.1	2	550
Fruity Bites (Wildberry)	“Source of fibre”.	24.8	6	48
Crunchy Nut Clusters	no	28.9	7	360

Media release



Rice Bubbles	"7 Vitamins and Minerals".	10.6	2.5	530
Crispix	"No artificial colours or flavours".	24	6	725



obesity
policy
coalition

Front-of-pack claims made by 10 popular breakfast cereals for adults:

Cereal product	Any health claims / nutrition content claims on the pack? E.g. 'source of calcium' 'fibre' etc?	Sugar per 100g (g)	Teaspoons per 100 grams	Sodium per 100g (mg)
Just Right	"Low in salt. High in fibre. Goodness of wholegrain".	28.7	7	30
Special K	"99% fat free. New three grain recipe containing fibre and protein".	14.5	3.5	490
Sultana Bran	"High in fibre and whole grain".	22.7	5.5	270
All Bran	"Very High in Fibre. 44% of your daily fibre needs".	13.6	3	380
Vita Brits	"99% Wholegrain. No added sugar".	0.4	Less than 1	400
Weet Bix	"97% wholegrain. Low in sugar. High in iron. B vitamins and folate".	3.3	Less than 1	290
Vogel's Ultra Bran	"Low GI. Soy & Linseed".	14.1	3.5	320
Carman's Original Fruit Free Muesli	"Low GI. Wheat free. Naturally sweetened with honey".	8	2	50
Lowan Original Muesli	"Low in salt and sugar. High in complex carbohydrates. High in fibre. No artificial flavours, colours or preservatives".	4.3	1	6
Be Natural Apple & Raisin Cereal	"No artificial flavours, colours or preservatives".	22.7	5.5	195

About the survey

In February 2015, the OPC reviewed 20 popular breakfast cereals examining sugar, salt and health claims on the packaging.

About the Obesity Policy Coalition

Media release

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a group of leading public health agencies who are concerned about the escalating levels of overweight and obesity, particularly in children.

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a partnership between Diabetes Australia - Vic, Cancer Council Victoria and the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University, with funding from VicHealth.



Media release

