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CANADIAN CHILDREN'S FOOD AND BEVERAGE ADVERTISING INITIATIVE: UNIFORM NUTRITION CRITERIA

BACKGROUNDER

Original CAI Nutrition Guidelines

To date, science-based, company-specific nutrition criteria have worked to drive a significant shift in the nutritional profile of foods and beverages advertised to children under 12 years of age. Each CAI participant's nutrition criteria was based on respected national and international scientific reports and guidelines, including those published by Health Canada and the U.S. Institute of Medicine (IOM).

Uniform Nutrition Criteria

The CAI is a living program that is continually being strengthened and improved. With this in mind, Participants developed and adopted one set of uniform nutrition criteria that are consistent, meaningful, and transparent, and will help parents who want to make healthier dietary choices. In 2012, the participants struck a Nutrition Review Committee of dietitians and nutritionists from participating companies, as well as an independent dietitian, to develop uniform nutrition criteria for all Participants to use.

Participants that advertise to children will now follow one set of uniform nutrition criteria to determine which foods and beverages can be advertised to children under 12. It is estimated that approximately 35% of products currently advertised to children by CAI Participants will be affected and will require reformulation in order to continue to be advertised to children.

About the Uniform Nutrition Criteria

The uniform criteria will provide a road map for Participants to follow as they develop new products and reformulate current products. The new criteria come into effect on December 31, 2015. They include:

- nutrition criteria for eight distinct product categories: milk and alternatives; grain; soups; meat and alternatives; vegetables and fruit; occasional snacks; mixed dishes; and meals on the go
- calorie maximums for products within each category
- criteria for "nutrients to limit", i.e. saturated and trans fats, sodium and total sugars
- criteria for "nutrients to encourage", i.e. vitamins, minerals and fibre

Five key principles governed the development of the criteria: science-based; appropriate and practical; comprehensive; progressive; and transparent.

Product Categories

As there is no single "gold standard" for nutrition criteria, Participants adopted an approach that incorporates eight overall product categories, with thresholds established for key nutrients. Eight overall product categories were developed in accordance with the food groups in *Canada's Food Guide*, but broadened as necessary to recognize nutritional differences in product categories and the role that they play in the overall diet. They are:

- Milk and Alternatives
- Grain
- Soups
- Meat and Alternatives
- Vegetables and Fruit
- Occasional Snacks
- Mixed Dishes
- Meals On The Go

Nutrition Criteria Components

In recognition of the important role of overall dietary patterns in health, the approach to developing the uniform nutrition criteria involved food components to both limit and encourage. This allowed for a restriction on nutrients of public health concern, as well as a focus on the positive attributes of foods.

The components to limit are calories, saturated and trans fats, sodium and total sugars. Dietary recommendations in *Canada's Food Guide* include limiting foods and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt (sodium) and choosing foods lower in saturated and trans fats. The components to encourage are vitamins and minerals and fibre, as well as whether a food contributes to the recommended number of servings in *Canada's Food Guide*.