

HEALTH CLAIMS IN CANADA ...

- ... suggest or imply that a relationship exists between consumption of a food (or an ingredient in the food) and health
- ... may be stated explicitly with words, or implied through symbols, graphics, logos or other means such as a name, trademark or seal of approval
- ... are often conditional upon the level of other nutrient(s) in the food. (In the U.S., disclosure statements are required in such instances. In Canada, disclosure statements are not required since claims cannot be made when certain nutrients exceed threshold levels.)
- ... must not emphasize or set apart individual words in the prescribed claim wording from other words by sizing differences, font, style or use of different colours
- ... must be truthful and not misleading
- ... trigger the requirement for a Nutrition Facts table in products that would be exempt from nutrition labeling if no claims were made
- ... are required to be represented in both English and French for disease risk reduction claims and nutrient function claims (unless the label is exempt from bilingual requirements) and are recommended to be represented in both languages for food or food constituent function claims
- ... are broadly categorized into two areas: (1) disease risk reduction claims, and (2) function claims
- ... sometimes include a third area – general health claims – that promote health through healthy eating or that provide dietary guidance, though these claims do not refer to a specific or general health effect, disease or health condition

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1. Disease risk reduction claims (formerly called *diet-related health claims*) link a food or food constituent to reducing the risk of developing a diet-related disease or condition within the context of the total diet. As such, more criteria apply to disease risk reduction claims than nutrient content claims. They require pre-approval, and the FDR prescribes the exact wording to be used. These claims are not permitted on foods that are intended solely for children under two years of age or represented for use in very low calorie diets.

At this time, disease risk reduction claims are limited to the following five categories:

- A diet low in sodium and high in potassium & the reduction of risk of hypertension
- A diet adequate in calcium and vitamin D & the reduction of risk of osteoporosis
- A diet low in saturated fat and trans fat & the reduction of risk of heart disease
- A diet rich in vegetables and fruits & the reduction of risk of some types of cancer
- Maximal fermentable carbohydrates in gum, hard candy or breath-freshening products & the reduced risk of dental caries



2. Function claims focus on specific beneficial effects that the consumption of a food or constituent of a food (i.e., nutrient or other component) has on normal functions or biological activities of the body. It is expected that manufacturers wanting to make function claims have scientific evidence that validates the claim prior to its use. This evidence may be used by CFIA, in collaboration with Health Canada, to evaluate product compliance with FDR. Thus, manufacturers and importers are encouraged to seek advice from Health Canada regarding acceptability of function claims on food products prior to their use. Claims reviewed and found to be acceptable will be added to the CFIA Guide.

Food or food constituent function claims are one type of function claims. There are currently three foods or food constituents with approved claims listed in the CFIA Guide. Examples of acceptable claims for these foods/food constituents are:

- (Serving size) of (product) contains X grams of fibre from coarse wheat bran, which promotes laxation.
- Consumption of 1 cup of green tea has an antioxidant effect on blood lipids.
- (Serving size) of (product) provides (X grams) of fibre from psyllium seed. Consuming 3.5 grams of fibre from psyllium seed daily promotes regularity.

Nutrient function claims (formerly called *biological role claims*) are a second type of function claims. This type of claim describes well-established roles of energy or other nutrients that are essential for the maintenance of good health, or normal growth and development. These claims may be general or specific:

Two *general nutrient function claims* are permissible for all nutrients:

- Energy (or another nutrient) is a factor in the maintenance of good health.
- Energy (or another nutrient) is a factor in normal growth and development.

An example of a *specific nutrient function claim* is:

- DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid, supports the normal physical development of the brain, eyes and nerves primarily in children under two years of age.

Other acceptable nutrient function claims shown in the following table are summarized in the CFIA Guide (including the new claims using the word “antioxidant” for vitamin C, vitamin E and selenium).



Acceptable Nutrient Function Claims for Canada*

Nutrient	Nutrient Function
PROTEIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps build and repair body tissues • helps build antibodies
FAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supplies energy • aids in the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins
DHA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DHA, an omega-3 fatty acid, supports the normal physical development of the brain, eyes and nerves primarily in children under two years of age
ARA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARA, an omega-6 fatty acid, supports the normal physical development of the brain, eyes and nerves primarily in children under two years of age
CARBOHYDRATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • supplies energy • assists in the utilization of fats
VITAMIN A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aids normal bone and tooth development • aids in the development and maintenance of night vision • aids in maintaining the health of the skin and membranes
VITAMIN D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in the formation and maintenance of bones and teeth • enhances calcium and phosphorus absorption and utilization
VITAMIN E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a dietary antioxidant • a dietary antioxidant that protects the fat in body tissues from oxidation
VITAMIN C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in the development and maintenance of bones, cartilage, teeth and gums • a dietary antioxidant • a dietary antioxidant that significantly decreases the adverse effects of free radicals on normal physiological functions • a dietary antioxidant that helps to reduce free radicals and lipid oxidation in body tissues
THIAMINE (VITAMIN B1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • releases energy from carbohydrates • aids normal growth
RIBOFLAVIN (VITAMIN B2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in energy metabolism and tissue formation
NIACIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aids in normal growth and development • a factor in energy metabolism and tissue formation
VITAMIN B6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in energy metabolism and tissue formation
FOLATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aids in red blood cell formation • a factor in normal early fetal development* • a factor in the normal early development of the fetal brain and spinal cord* <p><i>* for foods that contain at least 20% Daily Value per serving</i></p>
VITAMIN B12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aids in red blood cell formation
PANTOTHENIC ACID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in energy metabolism and tissue formation
CALCIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aids in the formation and maintenance of bones and teeth
PHOSPHORUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in the formation and maintenance of bones and teeth
MAGNESIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in energy metabolism, tissue formation and bone development
IRON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in red blood cell formation
ZINC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in energy metabolism and tissue formation
IODINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a factor in the normal function of the thyroid gland
SELENIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a dietary antioxidant involved in the formation of a protein that defends against oxidative stress

* Adapted from CFIA Guide to Food Labelling & Advertising

