

# Nutrition Labelling is Changing

This paper has been produced by the Medical Foods Working Group of the British Specialist Nutrition Association which represents the manufacturers of foods for special medical purposes, as well as other specialist dietetic foods.

In October 2008, the EU updated nutrition labelling legislation.<sup>1</sup> As we know, research is always changing our view of nutrition. Whether it's looking at cutting edge research into diet and health, or just reviewing how much of a particular vitamin or mineral we need, research never stands still. This has been reflected in changes to the nutrition labelling directive to take into account of research on RDAs, fibre and erythritol.

## Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs)

In 1988, an expert committee of the FAO/WHO reviewed information on RDAs and recommended a new set of values. In Europe that has resulted in an overhaul of the Nutrition Labelling Directive, with us since 1990. While some RDAs have remained the same – for example, it is still 800mg for calcium – others have changed, and some new RDAs have been added, as shown in **Table One**.

Nutrient	RDA	Previous RDA	Nutrient	RDA	Previous RDA
Vitamin A (ug)	800	800	Potassium (mg)	2000	New
Vitamin D (ug)	5	5	Chloride (mg)	800	New
Vitamin E (mg)	12	10	Calcium (mg)	800	800
Vitamin K (ug)	75	New	Phosphorus (mg)	700	800
Vitamin C (mg)	80	60	Magnesium (mg)	375	300
Thiamin (mg)	1.1	1.4	Iron (mg)	14	14
Riboflavin (mg)	1.4	1.6	Zinc (mg)	10	15
Niacin (mg)	16	18	Copper (mg)	1	New
Vitamin B6 (mg)	1.4	2	Manganese (mg)	2	New
Folic Acid (ug)	200	200	Fluoride (mg)	3.5	New
Vitamin B12 (ug)	2.5	1	Selenium (ug)	55	New
Biotin (ug)	50	0.15mg	Chromium (ug)	40	New
Pantothenic Acid (mg)	6	6	Molybdenum (ug)	50	New
			Iodide (ug)	150	150

## Fibre

Fibre has traditionally been eaten as plant material, and has a range of beneficial physiological effects. Recent research has shown that other carbohydrate polymers that are not naturally occurring in food, also have such beneficial effects. The definition of fibre has, therefore, been expanded in the legislation to take account of this research. The definition now includes carbohydrate polymers with three or more monomeric units, which are neither

digested nor absorbed in the human small intestine; thus both fibre from foods and edible synthetic carbohydrate polymers are included.

In addition to the extension of the definition for fibre, the FAO report of a workshop on food energy indicates that 70 per cent of the fibre in traditional foods is assumed to be fermentable. This means that fibre should be assigned an energy value. This value has been added to the legislation and has been set at 2kcal/g or 8kJ/g so declared energy values may change for fibre-containing products as a result of the new conversion factor

## Erythritol

Erythritol is a polyol, so had previously been assigned a calorie value of 2.4 kcal/g in line with other polyols. However, the Scientific Committee on Food in its opinion on erythritol from March 2003 noted that the energy provided by erythritol was less than 0.9kJ/g or 0.2kcal/g. Therefore, the Nutrition Labelling Directive has been amended to assign a value of 0kcal/g for erythritol.

## So what will happen and when?

Manufacturers have been reviewing their product portfolios since the legislation was passed. You are likely to see changes to nutrition labelling as follows:

- RDAs for vitamins and minerals may have to be recalculated, or products may be reformulated to increase or decrease the amount of vitamins and minerals added to a product
- New nutrients may be added to nutrition tables where an RDA has been introduced
- Fibre levels could 'increase' (since the definition of fibre has effectively broadened)
- The level of carbohydrate might, by contrast, reduce as the definition now takes into account some material that would previously been classified as carbohydrate, rather than fibre
- Products containing erythritol could see their calorie values decrease
- Consequently, energy (calorie) levels in products may change

The legislation will require changes to all labelling by **31st October 2012**.

1. Commission Directive 2008/100/EC of 28th October 2008 O.J. L285, 9-12

## The British Specialist Nutrition Association Ltd.

The Infant and Dietetic Foods Association Ltd (IDFA Ltd) changed its name on 10th March 2010 to the British Specialist Nutrition Association Ltd (BSNA Ltd.)

The new name – BSNA Ltd. – reflects changes over the past five years to the balance of our membership and our partnerships with linked organisations, which has evolved to have two important elements: infant and young children nutrition on one side and adult specialist nutrition on the other. Because of this change in membership and emphasis we have chosen a new name for our organisation which more accurately reflects these developments.

As the pre-eminent dietetic Trade Association in this country, we will continue to represent the manufacturers of specialist dietetic foods – organised in the key specialist sectors: Sports Foods, Gluten-Free Foods, Slimming Foods, Medical Foods, Foods for Infants and Young Children.

For further information, visit: [www.bsna.co.uk](http://www.bsna.co.uk)

British Specialist Nutrition Association Ltd, 6 Catherine Street, London, WC2B 5JJ • Tel: 020-7836 2460 • Fax 020-7836 0580

