
BACKGROUND

FDA'S NEW HEALTHY DEFINITION



EGGS ARE HEALTHY



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The **U.S. Food and Drug Administration** (FDA) has updated the **“healthy”** claim definition for food labeling to be consistent with current nutrition science and federal dietary guidance. The new definition of “healthy” may be used starting April 28, 2025 (Effective Date).

The FDA is an agency within the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** (HHS) tasked with protecting public health through various means, including the safety and security of our nation’s food supply.

This document explains the criteria for use of the “healthy” claim under the FDA’s new definition. You can review the entire [final definition here](#) in the Federal Register. An infographic from FDA is also available [here](#).

IN AN EGG SHELL



The new definition of “healthy” is aligned with current nutrition science and federal dietary guidance, namely the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) (DGAs) and the updated Nutrition Facts Label. The new regulation of “healthy” emphasizes the importance of **healthy dietary patterns** and **nutrient-dense foods and beverages**, much like the DGAs. The FDA’s new definition uses a food group-based approach, prioritizing nutrient-dense foods, in addition to nutrients to limit, which are sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars. This is based on the understanding that each food group contributes various important nutrients to the diet.

NUTRIENTS TO LIMIT:



Saturated Fat



Sodium



Added Sugars

All sizes of shell eggs (regardless of production method) automatically qualify for the “healthy” claim.

In addition, all other nutrient-dense foods that are encouraged by the DGA (vegetables; fruits; whole grains; fat-free and low-fat dairy; and lean meat, seafood, beans, peas, lentils, nuts and seeds) with no added ingredients except water, automatically qualify for the **“healthy”** claim.

Other foods that are labeled as **“healthy”** must contain a certain amount of food from at least one food group or subgroup and meet the thresholds for nutrients to limit. The criteria is adjusted for each food product group.

For example, an individual food that utilizes eggs as an ingredient, must contain at least one food group equivalent of egg (50 grams or 1 large egg) and meet criteria for nutrients to limit in order to be labeled “healthy.”





WHAT HAS CHANGED

Nutrition science has evolved significantly in the 30 years since “**healthy**” was originally defined by the FDA in 1994. Thus, you will find some key differences in the new definition.

Notably, **total fat is no longer included in the nutrients to limit**. Instead of recommending lower fat intake overall, dietary guidance has now shifted to focus on the types of fat. The DGAs recommend limiting saturated fat to 10% of daily calories for those 2 years and older, and **replacing excess saturated fats with health-promoting unsaturated fats like monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat**. Thus, saturated fat remains as a nutrient to limit and total fat has been removed.

Since 2015, the DGAs do not make a specific recommendation regarding a daily limit on dietary cholesterol. Similarly, **cholesterol is also no longer included as a nutrient to limit in the new healthy definition**. Additionally, the disclosure statement that is required when making nutrient-content claims for eggs, “See nutrition information for cholesterol content,” is not required for the use of the claim “healthy.”

Nutrients to encourage are also no longer included in the new definition as the new food group approach ensures that essential nutrients are covered. **The DGAs recommend consuming various food groups and subgroups for a diet that is nutritionally adequate**. The FDA stated a concern that including criteria for nutrients to encourage could incentivize the fortification of foods that do not contribute a meaningful amount of a food group (for example, white bread fortified with calcium).

FDA has indicated they are continuing to explore the **development of a “healthy” symbol** that manufacturers could use on food labels. This symbol is not yet available, however, the word “healthy” may be claimed on labels and in labeling. For more information, see FDA’s webpage on [“Use of the Term Healthy on Food Labeling.”](#)

1994 DEFINITION 2024 DEFINITION

LIMIT:

- Total fat
- Saturated fat
- Cholesterol
- Sodium

LIMIT:

- Saturated fat
- Sodium
- Added sugars

ENCOURAGE:

- Vitamin A
- Vitamin C
- Calcium
- Iron
- Protein
- Fiber

Nutrients to encourage are no longer included in favor of a food group approach.

Some foods that did not qualify as “**healthy**” under the 1994 definition, but can now use the “**healthy**” nutrient content claim include:

- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Avocados
- ✓ Nuts and seeds
- ✓ Higher-fat fish, (e.g. Salmon)
- ✓ Certain oils
- ✓ Water

Products that qualified for “healthy” in the original definition, but do not under the new definition include:

- ✗ White bread
- ✗ Highly sweetened yogurt
- ✗ Highly sweetened cereal

