

New calorie labelling rules come into force to improve nation's health

- Government also encouraging smaller businesses to adopt calorie labelling as part of its drive to improve the nation's health and tackle obesity levels
- Part of government's ongoing commitment to level up the nation's health

New rules requiring calorie information to be displayed on menus and food labels come into force today (Wednesday April 6 2022).

The changes – which were approved by parliament in 2021 – mean it is now a legal requirement for large businesses with more than 250 employees, including cafes, restaurants, and takeaways to display calorie information of non-prepacked food and soft drinks.

Calorie information will need to be displayed on menus, online menus, third party apps, food delivery platforms and food labels at the point a customer is making their food and drink choices. As well as listing the calories for each food item, menus and labels will also need to include daily recommended calorie needs.

The legislation, which forms part of the government's strategy to tackle obesity, aims to ensure people can make more informed, healthier choices when it comes to eating food out or ordering takeaways. Displaying calorie information may also encourage businesses to provide lower calorie options for their customers.

It is estimated that overweight and obesity related conditions across the UK cost the NHS £6.1 billion each year. Almost two-thirds (63%) of adults in England are overweight or living with obesity – and 40% of children leave primary school overweight or obese. Obesity is also the second biggest cause of cancer across the UK.

The Covid pandemic has highlighted the impact that obesity can have on people's health, and as part of its drive to level up the health of the nation, the government is also asking smaller businesses to adopt calorie labelling.

Public Health Minister Maggie Throup said:

It is crucial that we all have access to the information we need to maintain a healthier weight, and this starts with knowing how calorific our food is. We are used to knowing this when we are shopping in the supermarket, but this isn't the case when we eat out or get a take-away.

As part of our efforts to tackle disparities and level up the nation's health, these measures are an important building block to

making it as easy as possible for people to make healthier food choices.

The most recent official data shows that in 2019/20, there were over one million hospital admissions where obesity was the primary or secondary cause, an increase of 17% on 2018/19 when there were 876,000 obesity-related admissions.

Bridget Turner, Director of Policy, Campaigns and Improvement at Diabetes UK, said:

Obesity is the single greatest risk factor for type 2 diabetes and there are an estimated 13.6 million people at increased risk of developing the condition in the UK.

Tackling this health crisis is vital, so the government's commitment to make large takeaway, cafe and restaurant chains calorie label the food they sell is a welcome move towards reducing the rising levels of obesity in the UK.

Diabetes UK campaigned strongly for these measures through our Food Upfront campaign. We hope it will bring these large, out of home businesses more in line with the food retail sector when it comes to giving people clear calorie information for the food they buy, hopefully leading to improved menus and healthier options.

There are some exemptions to the legislation including food that is only on a menu for 30 days of the year or less and all alcohol drinks above 1.2% ABV.

The legislation will be enforced by local authorities with the Department of Health and Social Care supporting them with the additional costs of enforcing the policy. Local Authorities are encouraged first to have conversations with those businesses who are not complying with the law. Local authorities can issue improvement notices. Any person who fails to comply with a notice could be guilty of an offence and could be fined £2,500.

Buying food on the go or getting takeaways are increasingly important to people. On average the portions of food or drink that people eat out or eat as takeaway meals contain twice as many calories as their equivalent bought in a shop, where labelling is much more common. Research suggests that food people eat outside the home makes up 20-25% of adult calorie intake

In a survey by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities on calorie reduction, 79% of respondents said they think that menus should include the number of calories in food and drinks.

The types of businesses covered by the requirement include:

- restaurants, fast food outlets, cafes, pubs and supermarkets
- home delivery services and third-party apps selling food that is in

scope of the legislation

- cafes and takeaways within larger shops and venues, such as supermarkets, department stores, and entertainment venues such as cinemas
- specialist food stores, delicatessens, sweet shops and bakeries
- contract catering – for example, for events and canteens, and
- domestic transport businesses including planes, trains, ferries and other forms of water transport within the UK.

As part of the government's obesity strategy we have also introduced regulations to restrict the promotion of less healthy foods by location and volume price in store and online, which come into force in October 2022, and through the Health and Care Bill, restrictions on the advertising of less healthy foods on TV before 9pm and via online paid for advertising.