

PHE definition of free sugars¹

Further to the recommendation from the 2015 Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition report *Carbohydrates and Health* that a definition of free sugars should be adopted, Public Health England has set a definition for free sugars in the UK.

This definition of free sugars for the UK

includes:

- all added sugars in any form;
- all sugars naturally present in fruit and vegetable juices, purées and pastes and similar products in which the structure has been broken down
- all sugars in drinks (except for dairy-based drinks);
- lactose and galactose added as ingredients.

excludes:

- sugars naturally present in milk and dairy products, fresh and most types of processed fruit and vegetables and in cereal grains, nuts and seeds.

The table below provides more detail:

Included in the definition of free sugars	Excluded from the definition of free sugars
All added sugar in whatever form, including honey, syrups and nectars whether added to products during manufacture or by the consumer during cooking or at the table. This includes ingredients such as malt extract and glucose syrup	Ingredients not included in the definition of sugar used for nutrition labelling, that is, monosaccharides and disaccharides Maltodextrins, oligofructose and sugar substitutes such as polyols (sorbitol) are excluded from the definition
Lactose and galactose added as an ingredient to foods or drinks, including lactose in whey powder added as an ingredient	Lactose and galactose when naturally present in milk and dairy products including milk powder
All the sugars naturally present in fruit and vegetable (including legumes) juices, concentrates, smoothies, purées, pastes, powders and extruded fruit and vegetable products*	All the sugars naturally present in fresh and most types of processed (dried, stewed, canned and frozen) fruit and vegetables (including beans and pulses) except for juices, smoothies, purées, pastes, powders and extruded products Sugars naturally present in puréed and powdered potatoes and other starchy staples
All sugars in drinks except for milk and other dairy-based drinks. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• all sugars in unsweetened fruit and vegetable juices, fruit and vegetable juice concentrates and smoothies;• all sugars in alcoholic drinks;• all sugars naturally present in dairy-alternative drinks such as soya, rice, oat and nut-based drinks	Lactose and galactose naturally present in milk and other dairy-based drinks All sugars naturally present in cereal grains including rice, pasta and flour regardless of processing (other than cereal-based drinks) All sugars naturally present in nuts and seeds regardless of processing (other than nut-based drinks)

*Typically free sugars in vegetable juices, concentrates, smoothies, purées, pastes, powders and extruded vegetable products (including pulses) contain very low amounts of free sugars (EU nutrition claim would be 'low sugars'). For example, 50g (3 tsp) serving of houmous contains 0.3g of free sugars, 250ml serving of unsweetened soya milk alternative contains 1.5g of free sugars, and 100g (1/4 can) of canned chopped tomatoes contains 1.9g of free sugars. In comparison with a 45g bar of chocolate which contains 21.1g of free sugars.

¹Swan GE, Powell NA, Knowles BL *et al.* (2018) [A definition of free sugars for the UK](#). *Public Health Nutr.* 21(9):1636-1638.