

Hard-hitting warning labels should be on everyday food, say campaigners

Level 3: Advanced

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Do you pay attention to food labels? Do you think they influence your decisions on what to buy?
2. Do you believe consumers should be warned about the health risks of the food they buy in the same way they are warned about smoking?
3. Should governments play a role in regulating food labels to protect public health, or should it be left to individual responsibility?

2 Key words

a. Match the words with their definitions. All the words appear in the article.

- | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--|
| 1. bar | _____ | a. uncompromisingly direct and honest, especially in revealing unpleasant or difficult facts |
| 2. boosted | _____ | b. strongly advising or encouraging someone to do a particular thing |
| 3. compel | _____ | c. a request made in an urgent and passionate manner |
| 4. deceptive | _____ | d. force or drive someone to take a particular action or to behave in a certain way |
| 5. hard-hitting | _____ | e. clear, severe or blunt, without any softening |
| 6. levy | _____ | f. required or compulsory, often by law, regulation or authority |
| 7. mandatory | _____ | g. prevent or prohibit someone from doing something or going somewhere |
| 8. outlawed | _____ | h. an official charge or tax imposed by a government or authority |
| 9. plaster | _____ | i. improved |
| 10. plea | _____ | j. a critical turning point or a moment of significant change or development in history, events or a situation |
| 11. regime | _____ | k. officially prohibited by law |
| 12. stark | _____ | l. rigorous and difficult to bend or ignore, generally related to rules or standards |
| 13. stringent | _____ | m. making you believe something that is not true |
| 14. urging | _____ | n. heavily cover something |
| 15. watershed | _____ | o. a structured system or set of rules governing how something is done |

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b. Use some of the key words above to complete these sentences. You may need to change the form of the word.

1. The painter managed to capture the _____ beauty of the barren landscape.
2. He issued a(n) _____ for donations to support the victims of the fire.
3. Her energy levels were significantly _____ once she changed her eating habits.
4. The packaging was _____, leading customers to believe the product was of far better quality than it was.
5. Do you think it'll be _____ for companies to include this information on their packaging?
6. Smoking in enclosed public places and workplaces has been _____ in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 2007 and in Scotland since 2006.
7. They were _____ to revisit their plans after the new regulations were enforced.
8. They decided to _____ entry to the concert once the incidents started.
9. The new measures are _____ and difficult to comply with.
10. I _____ them to take the situation seriously and take immediate action.

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Health charities call for taxes on salty products and bans on junk-food sponsorship of sport to help cut deaths from heart disease

Denis Campbell

6 September, 2024

- 1 Hard-hitting warning labels should be put on everyday foodstuffs, new taxes imposed on salty products and junk-food sponsorship of sport banned to cut rising deaths from heart disease, health campaigners have said.
- 2 These “bold” measures should be imposed as part of a determined drive to reduce the number of people dying prematurely from heart attacks and strokes, they said.
- 3 The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is also proposing other action to tackle the UK’s increasingly bad diet, including bans on junk-food firms advertising on billboards or radio.
- 4 The charity is urging the government to force the food industry to start making its products more nutritious by stripping out what are often high – but hidden – levels of salt and sugar, which are damaging to health.
- 5 Taking such radical steps could cut the death toll from heart disease of people in England before they reach the age of 75 and save as many as 11,000 lives a year by 2035, the BHF estimates.
- 6 Cardiac fatalities have risen since 2019–22, after falling for 60 years before that. Overall, 39,000 people in England died before their 75th birthday in 2022 – the highest number since 2008.
- 7 The charity’s plea follows Keir Starmer’s statement last week that his administration is willing to take tough action to tackle deeply ingrained public-health problems that cause disease, disability and death, such as by potentially banning smoking in some outdoor places.
- 8 The BHF is asking ministers to compel food producers to put stark warnings on cans, bottles and tins of their products in order to alert people to the health risks.
- 9 Those labels would have to be mandatory, because simply asking profit-driven food companies to voluntarily reformulate their portfolio to make it healthier – the approach taken by the Conservative governments between 2010 and this July – does not work, the charity added.
- 10 Its proposed ban on firms whose products are deemed unhealthy sponsoring sports events would bar energy drinks Carabao from attaching its name to English football’s League Cup, McDonald’s from sponsoring the Football Association’s youth football development programme, and KP Snacks from being an official team partner of the Hundred cricket competition, for example.
- 11 “The government must be ambitious about improving everyone’s health and implement the measures we know will work. A new levy on salt and sugar could prevent almost 2 million cases of chronic disease and also raise up to 3 billion British pounds sterling a year,” the BHF said in a 22-page action plan. The sugar tax imposed on soft drinks in the UK in 2018 has made many drinks healthier and boosted children’s health.
- 12 The charity is also recommending that ministers extend the planned ban on junk-food adverts airing before the 9pm TV watershed or online to billboards and radio, and that “buy one get one free” offers in supermarkets, which recent governments have toyed with, are outlawed.
- 13 Bite Back, the campaigning arm of chef Jamie Oliver’s organisation, backed the BHF’s call. “Big challenges require bold solutions and we need this government to step in and introduce stringent regulations that prohibit the big food companies’ predatory marketing tactics of unhealthy products,” James Toop, its chief executive, said. “These measures must make it easier for everyone to be healthy and protect young people from being the cardiac statistics of the future.
- 14 “Food packaging is incredibly deceptive, so we also need to ensure businesses use clear, front-of-pack labels and are not allowed to plaster unhealthy products with misleading health and nutrition claims,” he added.
- 15 The Food and Drink Federation said food and drink producers agreed that bold action was needed to address bad diet and excess weight, which causes cancer, diabetes and joint problems as well as heart problems.
- 16 “Businesses have invested more than 160 million British pounds sterling since 2023 to create healthier food and drink, by reducing calories, sugar and salt, and adding fibre, fruit and vegetables, alongside launching new products and smaller portion sizes,” a spokesperson said.

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- 17 But healthcare providers and the third sector, not just industry, needed to be involved too, the federation added.
- 18 The Department of Health and Social Care declined to comment directly on the BHF's proposals and said any changes to the tax regime were a matter for the Treasury. A spokesperson said: "Cardiovascular disease is one of this country's biggest killers, and this government has already taken action to tackle it, recognising that prevention is better than cure.
- 19 "As part of this, we have already recently introduced health checks in workplaces, to help catch ill-health earlier. We expect up to 130,000 extra health checks to be delivered by March 2025 as a result.
- 20 "We will also introduce the tobacco and vapes bill, which will take action to tackle the harms of smoking."
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a. Complete the sentences using words and phrases from the article.

1. Campaigners assert this is one of a set of measures necessary to prevent people from _____.
2. In fact, the BHF _____ these actions may save thousands of lives in the coming decade.
3. Some of the health issues being addressed are _____ and utterly serious.
4. The BHF proposes labels are _____, since asking companies to do it _____ has not been effective.
5. The charity also intends to _____ fast-food producers from attaching their brands to sports events.
6. Jamie Oliver's organisation supports initiatives that go against the use of _____ by fast-food companies.
7. The government has recently taken action following their belief that _____ is better than cure.

4 Key language

a. Complete the following sentences from the article with the correct form of the words in brackets.

1. Hard-hitting warning labels should be put on everyday foodstuffs, new taxes imposed on salty products and junk food _____ of sport banned to cut rising deaths from heart disease. (SPONSOR)
2. The British Heart Foundation (BHF) is also proposing other actions to tackle the UK's _____ bad diet, including bans on junk-food firms advertising on billboards or radio. (INCREASE)
3. The charity is urging the government to force the food industry to start making its products more _____ by stripping out what are often high levels of salt and sugar, which are damaging to health. (NUTRITION)

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4. The charity's plea follows Keir Starmer's statement last week that his administration is willing to take tough action to tackle deeply ingrained public-health problems that cause disease, _____ and death. (DISABLE)
5. Those labels would have to be mandatory because simply asking profit-driven food companies to voluntarily _____ their portfolio to make it healthier does not work, the charity added. (FORMULA)
6. The government must be _____ about improving everyone's health and implement the measures we know will work. (AMBITION)
7. Food packaging is incredibly _____, so we also need to ensure businesses use clear, front-of-pack labels and are not allowed to plaster unhealthy products with misleading health and nutrition claims. (DECEIVE)
8. We will also introduce the tobacco and vapes bill, which will take action to tackle the _____ of smoking. (HARMFUL)

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- 'Hard-hitting warning labels should be put on everyday foodstuffs, new taxes imposed on salty products and junk food sponsorship of sport banned to cut rising deaths from heart disease'.
- 'Labels would have to be mandatory because simply asking profit-driven food companies to voluntarily reformulate their portfolio to make it healthier does not work'.
- "Food packaging is incredibly deceptive".

6 In your own words

- a. In pairs or small groups, create a short survey to gather information about your classmates' opinions on the introduction of warning labels and their effectiveness. Include at least five questions.
- b. Analyse your results and present your findings and conclusions to the class.
- c. Listen to your classmates' findings and jot down any interesting conclusions you can add to yours.
- d. Write a report using both your own findings and at least one insight from another group.