

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

Level 2: Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Have you seen labels on food packages that warn about high salt, sugar or calorie content? On what kinds of foods?
2. Do you pay attention to food labels? Do they influence your decisions?
3. Do you believe we should be warned about the health risks of the food we buy in the same way we are warned about smoking?

2 Key words

a. Write the letters to match the words with their definitions. All the words appear in the article.

- | | | |
|----------------|-------|---|
| 1. ban | _____ | a. when a company or person gives money or support to an event, activity or organisation in exchange for getting their name or brand promoted |
| 2. compel | _____ | b. force someone to do something, or make them feel they have to do it |
| 3. deceptive | _____ | c. happening or being done too soon, especially before the expected or right time |
| 4. deemed | _____ | d. strongly encouraging or pushing someone to do something, often because it is important or necessary |
| 5. mandatory | _____ | e. seen / regarded as |
| 6. misleading | _____ | f. suffering, deaths or damage |
| 7. prematurely | _____ | g. giving the wrong idea or impression, making someone believe something that isn't true or to make mistakes it could be unintentional |
| 8. sponsorship | _____ | h. officially prohibited by law |
| 9. toll | _____ | i. something that must be done because it is required by law or rules |
| 10. urging | _____ | j. deliberately making you believe something that is not true |

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

1. The government has decided to _____ smoking in public parks to promote a healthier environment.
2. After a thorough investigation, the incident was _____ an accident.
3. The event organisers financed the costs with the help of _____ from various local businesses.
4. The packaging was _____, making customers believe the product was of better quality than it was.
5. Do you think it'll be _____ for companies to include this information in their packaging?
6. They were _____ to revisit their plans after the new law was introduced.
7. I _____ them to take immediate action.

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Denis Campbell
6 September, 2024

- 1 Strong 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 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 request follows Keir Starmer’s statement last week that his administration is willing to take tough action to tackle 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 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 make their products healthier does not work, the charity added.
- 10 The proposed ban on firms whose products are deemed unhealthy sponsoring sports events would prohibit energy drinks Carabao from attaching its name to English football’s League Cup or McDonald’s from sponsoring the Football Association’s youth football development programme, for example.
- 11 Bite Back, the campaigning arm of chef Jamie Oliver’s organisation, supported the BHF’s proposal. “Big challenges require bold solutions and we need this government to step in and introduce strict regulations that prohibit the big food companies’ unfair marketing strategies used to sell 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.
- 12 “Food packaging is incredibly deceptive, so we also need to ensure businesses use clear, front-of-pack labels and are not allowed to include misleading health and nutrition claims,” he added.
- 13 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.
- 14 “As part of this, we have already recently introduced health checks in workplaces, to help catch ill-health earlier.
- 15 “We will also introduce the tobacco and vapes bill, which will take action to tackle the harms of smoking.”

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3 Comprehension check

a. Choose the correct options to complete the sentences.

1. Campaigners believe measures are necessary to prevent people from **dying prematurely / imposing new taxes / ignoring food labels**.
2. In fact, the BHF **knows / estimates / doesn't believe** that these actions may save thousands of lives in the next decade.
3. The BHF believes labels should be **mandatory / detailed / banned**, since asking companies to voluntarily label products has not been effective.
4. The charity also intends to ban fast-food producers from sponsoring **energy drinks / unhealthy activities / sports events**.
5. Jamie Oliver's organisation supports initiatives that go against the use of **unfair marketing strategies / unhealthy products / bold solutions** by fast-food companies.
6. The government has recently taken action following their belief that **the tax regime needs to change / prevention is better than cure / cardiovascular disease is the biggest problem**.

4 Key language

a. Match words from columns A and B to form collocations used in the article.

- | A | B |
|------------|----------------|
| 1. health | a. steps |
| 2. heart | b. problems |
| 3. junk | c. toll |
| 4. food | d. regulations |
| 5. radical | e. food |
| 6. death | f. industry |
| 7. tackle | g. checks |
| 8. strict | h. disease |

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5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- 'Strong 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' diet. Include at least five questions.

b. Analyse your results and present your findings and conclusions to the class.

Don't forget to:

- share the most interesting findings.
- draw conclusions about your classmates' diet patterns.
- offer suggestions for healthier habits.

c. Listen to your classmates' findings and ideas and make some notes.

d. Use all your findings and notes to write an article entitled 'Eating habits in our country and suggestions for a healthier diet'.