



FCPMC · FPACC

## INFORMATION ON...HEALTH CLAIMS

### What is a Health Claim?

A health claim is a statement that links a food to the reduced risk of diet-related disease (such as osteoporosis, cancer and heart disease). In the United States, where health claims have been allowed since 1990, these typically appear on product labels or in advertising. Health Canada distinguishes between two types of health claims: generic (can be applied to any food that meets the criteria for the claim) or product specific (cannot be generalized to other similar products unless acceptable supporting evidence is provided).

### The Facts

- Health claims are a communications tool to educate Canadians about the relationship between diet and prevention of chronic diseases.
- Health claims, in addition to being either generic or product specific, can take on two forms:
  1. **Structure/function claims**, which describe the role of a nutrient or food component and its effect on a structure or physiological function in the human body, i.e., Calcium helps build strong bones.
  2. **Risk-reduction claims**, which describe the relationship between the consumption of a food and the reduction in the risk of developing a chronic disease or abnormal physiological state, i.e., Diets high in calcium may help reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

### Health Canada Policy Recommendations

- Health Canada published amendments to the *Food and Drugs Act* in the *Canada Gazette* Part II on January 1, 2003 introducing five generic health claims that must meet specific criteria (nutrient composition). The claims are related to:
  1. Sodium, Potassium & Hypertension (high blood pressure);
  2. Calcium, Vitamin D & Osteoporosis;
  3. Saturated and Trans Fat & Heart Disease;
  4. Fruits and Vegetables & Cancer; and
  5. Sugar Alcohols & Dental Caries.
- Additional generic health claims will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and approved based on scientific merit.

### FCPMC Supports...

FCPMC supports the availability of food products with health claims based on clear standards and scientific criteria, which will provide a significant benefit to Canadians including promoting health, allowing consumers to make informed food choices and increasing consumer choice.

### Next Steps

Results of the public consultation on the proposed regulations for product-specific health claims are still pending.

### For More Information, visit...

- Amendments to the Food & Drugs Act for generic health claims  
[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/ns-sc/ne-en/health\\_claims-allegations\\_sante/e\\_index.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/ns-sc/ne-en/health_claims-allegations_sante/e_index.html)
- Proposed regulations for product-specific health claims  
[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/ns-sc/ne-en/health\\_claims-allegations\\_sante/e\\_reg\\_proposal\\_eng.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/ns-sc/ne-en/health_claims-allegations_sante/e_reg_proposal_eng.html)