

Briefing: The 2018 Nutrient Profiling Model

Overview

March 2026: The UK Government published the updated 2018 Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) in January 2026 and has now launched a consultation on applying it to existing regulations for less healthy food and drink. Companies can still produce and sell any products they choose; the model simply determines which can be advertised and promoted.

A Nutrient Profiling Model is a scoring system used to distinguish healthier from less healthy foods based on their nutritional content. The UK's current 2004/05 model underpins policies regulating the marketing of a limited number of categories of food and drinks high in fat, salt and sugar (HFSS), particularly to children, before 9pm on TV, 24/7 on paid-for online media across the UK, and multibuys and location promotions in large retailers in England.

The updated model reflects the latest scientific advice on free sugars and fibre, ensuring the rules better align with modern dietary guidance and the food on the market today. Crucially, it distinguishes between whole and minimally processed fruit and vegetables and ingredients derived from more heavily processed forms. This helps ensure that foods closer to their original form can be placed in the spotlight, while products low in fibre and containing free sugars created through processing are less likely to be promoted as everyday options.

Government analysis suggests that applying the updated model to existing restrictions could significantly increase their impact on obesity and diet-related health outcomes, including tooth decay and type 2 diabetes.

Current regulations do not comprehensively restrict unhealthy food and drink advertising and promotions. Updating how foods are classified is a necessary and common-sense next step. In addition, the Obesity Health Alliance will be calling for an expansion on the range of product categories in scope, and removing the exemption for 'brand' and 'brand of a range of products' advertising.

Why the Model was Updated

The current model was developed by the Food Standards Agency in 2004–2005. Since then:

- Dietary advice has evolved, particularly following recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN).
- Evidence on the harms of free sugars and the benefits of fibre has strengthened.
- The food environment has changed significantly, with more highly processed products entering the market.

What are Free Sugars?

The updated model incorporates stronger treatment of free sugars, following recommendations from the SACN. Free sugars include:

- sugars added during manufacturing
- sugars in honey and syrups

- sugars released when fruit or vegetables are processed (for example in juices or purées)

They do not include sugars naturally contained within intact or minimally processed fruits, vegetables or unsweetened milk/dairy products. This distinction is important because free sugars are more rapidly absorbed and are strongly linked to excess calorie intake, tooth decay, increased risk of type 2 diabetes and weight gain. It does not include artificial sweeteners.

Recognising the Role of Processing in the Food System

While the model was not designed to measure ultra-processed foods, as defined by Nova, the stronger focus on free sugars means it captures an important aspect of processing that was previously less visible in UK food policy. Some international food policies (for example in South America) have added indicators of ultra processed food, such as artificial sweeteners, to their models. The UK's 2018 Nutrient Profiling Model begins to capture the impact of processing itself, through its treatment of free sugars and fibre.

Many free sugars arise through industrial processing. For example:

- Ingredients are often refined or concentrated during processing.
- Turning fruit and vegetables into juices or purées releases sugars from their natural structure, making them easier to consume in large amounts and increasing the risk of tooth decay.
- Processing also breaks down fibre, meaning these products are less filling and less beneficial than whole fruit and vegetables.

Previously, some products containing whole fruit or vegetables or dairy could be penalised by the 'total' sugar calculation, even when those sugars were naturally present within the food. The updated model may reward products that contain whole fruit, vegetables and dairy-based ingredients. This helps ensure that foods which are heavily processed and containing free sugars are less likely to be classified as "healthier".

The Obesity Health Alliance recommends that the Nutrient Profiling Model should be kept under regular review as the evidence continues to develop, especially on the role of food processing and health.

Points Raised by Industry



Several companies have stated that they want to improve the nutritional quality of their products, and the updated model provides a clearer framework for doing so. Some parts of the food industry have raised concerns about the updated model, including that:

- A wider range of products may fall within the restrictions.
- Reformulated products may no longer qualify for promotion.
- The updated score is more complex because there is not a standardised calculator for free sugars.

However the model has been under discussion for several years, manufacturers hold detailed ingredients data for regulatory purposes from which a free sugars calculation can be estimated (as is usual in nutrition information), and many food businesses support having clearer incentives for healthier product development.

Next Steps

The government has launched a 12 week public consultation on applying the updated Nutrient Profiling Model to existing advertising and promotion restrictions [here](#). This consultation will allow food businesses, public health organisations, researchers and the public to provide evidence and feedback before final policy decisions are made.

Porridge			
	<p>Quaker Oat So Simple Golden Syrup Porridge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-scope of advertising and promotions regulations (category 3 -Breakfast cereals including ready-to-eat cereals, granola, muesli, porridge oats and other oat-based cereals) ● Ingredients: Quaker Rolled Oats (70%), Skimmed Milk Powder, Sugar, Salt, Natural Flavourings, Anticaking Agent (Calcium Phosphate) ● 21g total sugars per 100g / 12g total sugars per serving ● PASSES 2004/05 NPM ● Sugars (lactose and galactose) naturally present in skimmed milk powder do not count as free sugars. Estimating 4.5g lactose per 100g skimmed milk powder. ● 16.5g free sugars per 100g / 9.4g free sugars per serving ● FAILS 2018 NPM due to free sugars content 		<p>Asda No Added Sugar Original Porridge Pot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In-scope of advertising and promotions regulations (category 3 -Breakfast cereals including ready-to-eat cereals, granola, muesli, porridge oats and other oat-based cereals) ● Ingredients: Oat Flakes (75%), Skimmed Milk Powder ● 3.9g total sugars per 100g / 9.2g per serving ● PASSES 2004/05 NPM ● Sugars (lactose and galactose) naturally present in skimmed milk powder do not count as free sugars. ● Total sugars = free sugars ● PASSES 2018 NPM

Breakfast cereals





Kellogg's Coco Pops Chocolate Breakfast cereal



- **In scope** of advertising and promotions regulations (category 3 -Breakfast cereals including ready-to-eat cereals, granola, muesli, porridge oats and other oat-based cereals)
- Ingredients list: Rice, Sugar, Glucose Syrup, Fat Reduced Cocoa Powder, Salt, Cocoa Mass, Barley Malt Extract, Flavourings, Niacin, Iron, Vitamin B6, Riboflavin, Thiamin, Folic Acid, Vitamin D, Vitamin B12
- 17g total sugars per 100g / 5.1g total sugars per serving (30g)
- **PASSES 2004/05 NPM**
- No naturally occurring sugars from whole fruit, vegetables or unsweetened milk/milk products present
- Total sugars = Free sugars
- **FAILS 2018 NPM**



Nestlé - Original Shredded Wheat

- **In scope** of advertising and promotions regulations (category 3 -Breakfast cereals including ready-to-eat cereals, granola, muesli, porridge oats and other oat-based cereals)
- Ingredients list: Whole Grain Wheat (100%)
- 0.7g total sugars per 100g / 0.3g per serving (45g)
- **PASSES 2004/05 NPM**
- Free sugars does not include all sugars naturally present in cereal grains including rice, pasta and flour and all sugars naturally present in nuts and seeds (other than cereal-based or nut-based drinks)
- **PASSES 2018 NPM**

Fruit juices and juice drinks			
	<p>Ribena Blackcurrant Juice Drink (with added sugar and sweeteners)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In scope of advertising and promotions legislation (category 1 – soft drinks with added sugar, including Juice-based drinks, fruit juices or smoothies (including smoothies with dairy)) ● Ingredients list: Water, Blackcurrant Juice from Concentrate (6%), Sugar, Acidity Regulator (Sodium Gluconate), Thickener (Polydextrose), Vitamin C, Extracts of Carrot and Hibiscus, Natural Blackcurrant Flavourings, Acid (Citric Acid), Sweeteners (Acesulfame K, Sucralose). ● 4.3g total sugars per 100ml / 10.75g total sugars per serving (250ml - bottles are 500ml, which would total 21.5g) ● PASSES NPM 2004/05 ● Total sugars = free sugars ● FAILS NPM 2018 		<p>Tropicana Smooth orange juice (100% pure)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Excluded from category 1 of products in scope of advertising and promotions regulations - 100% pure fruit juice can continue to be advertised and promoted, even if they fail the 2018 NPM. ● This therefore does not penalise fruit juices and smoothies with no added sugar. However, these drinks are still high in free sugars and should be consumed in no larger portions than 150ml max per day. ● Ingredients: 100% Orange Juice. ● 8.9g total sugars per 100ml / 13g total sugars per serving ● PASSES 2004/05 NPM ● Total sugars = free sugars ● FAILS 2018 NPM due to free sugars content <u>but can continue to be advertised as is exempt from product categories in scope.</u>

Yogurts			
	<p>Muller Corner Vanilla Chocolate Balls (124g)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In scope of advertising and promotions regulations (category 10 - Includes dairy and non-dairy alternatives (such as soya, oat, goat or sheep products). ● Includes yoghurts that are sweetened using sweeteners, sugar or fruit ingredients. ● Ingredients: Yogurt (Milk), Sugar, Water, Wheat Flour (Gluten), Rice Flour, Cocoa Butter, Milk Powder, Cocoa Mass, Modified Starch, Flavourings, Glucose Syrup, Coconut Oil, Stabiliser: Pectins, Colour: Carotenes, Lactose (Milk), Glazing Agent: Acacia Gum, Whey Powder (Milk), Barley Malt, Salt, Milk Protein, Emulsifier: Soya Lecithin, Acidity Regulator: Citric Acid ● 16.9g total sugars per 100g / 20.9g total sugars per serving ● PASSES NPM 2004/05 ● Estimated 12.4g free sugars per 100g / 15g free sugars per serving (deducted 4.5g lactose per 100g) 		<p>Tesco 0% Fat Greek Style Yogurt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Excluded from advertising and promotions regulations (category 10 - Excludes natural unsweetened yoghurt and unsweetened fromage frais.) ● Ingredients: 100% British Milk. ● 6.6g total sugars per 100g and per serving ● PASSES 2004/05 NPM ● Free sugars does not include sugars (lactose and galactose) naturally present in cows' milk and other dairy products including dried milk powder ● 0g free sugars per 100g ● PASSES 2018 NPM

- FAILS NPM 2018

Protein bars



Joe Wicks Killer Protein Bar

- In scope of advertising and promotions regulations: category 7 (“Sweet biscuits and bars based on one or more of nuts, seeds or cereal.”)
- Ingredients: Chocolate Protein Dough (75%) (Protein Blend (Hydrolysed Whey Protein (Hydrolysed Whey Protein Isolate (MILK), Sunflower Lecithin), Hydrolysed Collagen, Caseinate Calcium (MILK)) (31%), Maltitol Syrup, Polydextrose, Oligofructose, Water, Fructo-oligosaccharides, Hydrogenated Palm Kernel Oil, Maltodextrin, Cocoa Powder (2.5%), Multivitamin Complex (Calcium Carbonate, Maltodextrin, Magnesium Oxide, Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid), Citrus Bioflavonoids (35% Hesperidin), Green Tea Extract (95% Polyphenols), Choline Bitartrate, Grape Seed Extract (95% Polyphenols), Lutein (Marigold Flower Extract), Iron (Ferrous Sulphate), Lycopene (Tomato Extract), Vitamin E (DL-Alpha Tocopherol Acetate), Anti-Caking Agent (Silicon Dioxide), Inositol, Quercetin, Zinc Oxide, Niacin (Nicotinamide), Vitamin D3 Preparation (Maltodextrin, Starch, Sucrose, Cholecalciferol), Coenzyme Q10, Pantothenic Acid (Calcium Pantothenate), Black Pepper Extract (95% Piperine), Vitamin A Preparation (Maltodextrin, Dextrin, Modified Starch, Vitamin A Acetate Oil, DL-Alpha Tocopherol), Lactobacillus Acidophilus, Vitamin K (Phylloquinone), Vitamin B6 (Pyridoxine HCl), Thiamin, Riboflavin, Manganese Sulphate, Folic Acid, Chromium Chloride, Copper Sulphate, Selenium (Sodium Selenite), Biotin, Vitamin B12 (Cyanocobalamin), Glycerol, Potassium Chloride, Multivitamin Complex (Calcium Citrate Malate Granular, Buffered Magnesium Citrate, Vitamin C (Ascorbic Acid), Ferrous (Iron II) Bisglycinate Chelate, Zinc Citrate Dihydrate, Natural Vitamin E (D-Alpha-Tocopheryl Acetate), Vitamin B3 (Nicotinamide), L-Selenomethionine, Vitamin A Acetate (Retinol), Vitamin B5 (Calcium Pantothenate), Vitamin K2 Menaquinone-7 (MK7), Manganese Sulphate, Beta Carotene, Copper Sulphate Anhydrous, Vitamin B12 (Methylcobalamin), Vitamin B6 ('P5P' Pyridoxal-5-Phosphate Monohydrate), Vitamin D2 Ergocalciferol, Vitamin B2 (Riboflavin), Vitamin B1 (Thiamine HCL), Chromium Picolinate, Vitamin B9 (L-5-MTHF), Potassium Iodide, Sodium Molybdate, Vitamin B7 (Biotin)), Flax Seed Oil, Sweetener: Xylitol, Preservative: Sodium Benzoate, Carboxymethylcellulose, Emulsifier: Xanthan Gum, Sunflower Lecithin, Sweetener: Aspartame, Sucralose), Orange Spread (12%) (Vanilla Flavour Frosting(Sugar, Vegetable Oils (Palm, Rapeseed), Water, Humectant (Sorbitol Syrup), Skimmed MILK Powder, Cream Cheese Powder (MILK) 3.5%, Natural Flavouring, Acid (Citric Acid), Salt, Emulsifier (E435), Preservative (Potassium Sorbate)), SOYA Protein Isolate, Maltitol Syrup, Colour: Annatto [E160b(ii), Maltodextrin], Orange Oil (0.1%)), Dark Chocolate Flavour Coating (10%) (Sugar, Palm Oil, Fat Reduced Cocoa Powder (14%), Emulsifier: SOYA Lecithin, Polyglycerol Polyricinoleate), SOY Crispies (SOYA Protein Isolate, Tapioca Starch, Salt), Orange Crunchies (0.3%) (Orange, Sucrose, Maize Starch)
- 11.6g total sugars per 100g / 6.9g total sugars per serving
- **PASSES 2004/05 NPM**
- **FAILS 2018 NPM**

Explainer: How the Nutrient Profiling Model works

The Nutrient Profiling Model (NPM) is a scoring system used to determine whether a food or drink is considered “healthier” or “less healthy” for the purposes of advertising and promotion rules. It works by balancing nutrients we should limit with components that are beneficial for health. Foods receive points for nutrients linked with poorer health outcomes:

- energy (calories)
- saturated fat
- free sugars (total in the old model)
- salt (sodium in the old model)

They can also score positive points for ingredients that support health, including:

- fibre
- fruit, vegetables and nuts (and seeds in the 2018 model)
- protein

These scores give an overall result. If a product scores above a certain threshold, it is classified as “less healthy”. The system does not ban any foods. It simply determines which products can be promoted across TV, online media (UK) and retail settings (England).

2004/05 NPM vs 2018 NPM: What’s changed?

- Free sugars replace total sugars, aligning with Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) and WHO recommendations.
- Sugar and energy-density thresholds are lowered, reducing opportunities for high-sugar/high-energy foods to pass.
- Model uses salt instead of sodium
- Seeds have been added to the fruit/vegetables/nuts score due to their having a similar nutritional profile to nuts.
- Fibre and protein scoring is revised, to align with adult recommended nutrient intakes. Foods high in fibre may now accrue more positive points (max of 10) but it’s free sugar content may still result in the product being classified as Less Healthy.

2004/05 vs 2018 NPM: What’s stayed the same?

- Currently applies to advertising and promotions policies
- The core structure of the NPM remains familiar to industry.
- The model does not apply to foods and drinks for infants and young children under 5.
- The protein cap remains unchanged from the 2004/05 NPM.
- If a product scores 11 or more ‘A’ points and less than 5 fruit vegetable, nut, seed points, protein is excluded from the score.
- Portion sizes/ Volume to weight conversions remain unchanged.

- The UK NPM remains based on the nutrient composition of 100g of a food or drink. Where nutrition information is provided per 100ml, values must be converted to per 100g using the product's specific gravity.

What's in Scope of the Current Marketing Regulations

- Categories in scope include sugary soft drinks, confectionery, cakes, breakfast cereals, savoury snacks, ready meals, sweet biscuits, morning goods, and desserts.
- Categories not in scope include (but not limited to) commercial baby food, sweet spreads, flavoured noodles, pastry products, fruit juices and smoothies.
- Products only fall inside scope if they fail to meet the government's nutrient profiling model thresholds and are high in fat, sugar, and/or salt (HFSS).
- For the advertising restrictions, the advert must also identify a product consumers can buy, not brand advertising.