

Sweet Truth

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q: What's the big deal? Why should I care about added sugars in chain restaurant food in NYC?

A: If you, your family members, friends or neighbors have struggled with type 2 diabetes, heart disease, liver disease, excess weight, or cancer, you should care about added sugars.¹ Overconsumption of added sugars can contribute to weight gain, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, dental cavities, and other chronic diseases.^{2,3}

And even if you haven't been touched personally by these health problems, you are still impacted by the huge amount of money that these conditions cut from the city's budget⁴ and the negative impact they have on the health of the workforce in NYC and NYS.⁵

Q: What would this bill do?

A: This bill would require warning icons on menu boards and signs at chain restaurants for items containing 50 grams or more of added sugars,⁶ very similar to the sodium warning icons instituted by the city at the end of 2015.⁷

Q: Why 50 grams? Why not more or less?

A: Fifty (50) grams of added sugars is the **daily** limit recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for someone consuming 2,000 calories a day.⁸ Keep in mind that is **twelve and a half teaspoons** of sugar at one time. That's a lot of sugar.



Q: Why added sugars and not total sugars?

A: Unlike the natural sugars found in fruits and veggies, which come with filling fiber and beneficial nutrients, added sugars are concentrated, empty calories used to get people to buy more processed foods and drinks.⁹

Q: I've heard that many restaurants have been struggling due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Won't this requirement be a burden for them?

A: This measure only applies to chain restaurants with fifteen (15) locations or more in the five boroughs. According to recent restaurant industry data, larger chain restaurants have recovered quite nicely from the pandemic. In fact, the 500 largest restaurant chains (as a group) grew their sales by 18% in 2021, effectively recovering from the pandemic as they generated hundreds of billions of dollars in sales.¹⁰

Large chain restaurants can easily calculate added sugars from their standardized recipes. This is already required for food manufacturers, who began putting added sugars information on food labels in 2020 under new federal rules.

In fact, the biggest chain in NYC, Dunkin' Donuts, is already publishing added sugars information for their menus online.¹¹

Q: Is this bill supported by New Yorkers?

A: Yes. A poll conducted in 2021 found that there was strong, bipartisan support for this, with 85% of NYC residents supporting warnings on chain restaurant menu items with more than a day's worth of added sugars.¹²

Q: How does this campaign support health equity?

A: Predominantly Black and Hispanic communities face higher exposure to fast food, a product of residential segregation rooted in historic policies like redlining, disinvestment, and targeted marketing.¹³ These neighborhoods are more likely to have fast food restaurants¹⁴ and fewer healthy food options.¹⁵ What's more, young Black and Latino children are the targets of lots of ads for sugary beverages and other junk foods. In 2019, chains such as McDonald's, Domino's, and Taco Bell, spent over \$1.5 billion on TV ads to target Black and Hispanic kids and teens, and almost all of these fast-food ads promoted full-calorie, adult-sized, regular menu items, not kids' meals.¹⁶

Q: Didn't the City Council already pass a bill that did this?

A: Yes and no. The version of the bill that passed at the end of 2021 was weakened for a number of reasons and only covers pre-packaged items (like cooler drinks). The new bill would cover all menu items, including fountain drinks.¹⁷

¹ Per the World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research "being overweight or obese throughout adulthood increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, pharynx and larynx; esophagus (adenocarcinoma); stomach (cardia); pancreas; gallbladder; liver; colorectum; breast (postmenopause); ovary; endometrium; prostate (advanced); and kidney." World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research (2018). Continuous Update Project Expert Report 2018. "Body fatness and weight gain and the risk of cancer." Available at [HYPERLINK "http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/"](http://www.dietandcancerreport.org/) dietandcancerreport.org

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² Malik, V. S., Schulze, M. B., & Hu, F. B. (2006). Intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and weight gain: a systematic review. *The American journal of clinical nutrition*, 84(2), 274-288. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajcn/84.1.274>

³ Hu F. B. (2013). Resolved: there is sufficient scientific evidence that decreasing sugar-sweetened beverage consumption will reduce the prevalence of obesity and obesity-related diseases. *Obesity reviews : an official journal of the International Association for the Study of Obesity*, 14(8), 606-619. <https://doi.org/10.1111/obr.12040>

⁴ Waters, H., & Graf, M. (2018). *The costs of chronic disease in the US*. Santa Monica, CA: The Milken Institute. Available at https://milkeninstitute.org/sites/default/files/reports-pdf/ChronicDiseases-HighRes-FINAL_0_1.pdf

⁵ Chronic illness hinders workforce productivity by increasing absenteeism, reducing the focused energy of workers, and depleting critical workplace skills." Singh, M., James, P. S., & Ganguli, S. (2018). Managing employees with chronic illness. *Human Resource Management International Digest* 26(1), 7-10.

⁶ CSPI (2021). "New York City passes the Sweet Truth Act, requiring warnings on chain restaurants' prepackaged foods and drinks that are high in added sugars." Available at <https://www.cspinet.org/press-release/new-york-city-passes-sweet-truth-act-requiring-warnings-chain-restaurants-prepackaged>

⁷ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (2016). "New sodium (salt) warning rule: What food service establishments need to know." Available at: <https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/cardio/sodium-warning-rule.pdf>

⁸ U.S. Food and Drug Administration (2022). "Added sugars on the new nutrition facts label." [webpage]. Available at <https://www.fda.gov/food/new-nutrition-facts-label/added-sugars-new-nutrition-facts-label>

⁹ Lee, A. K., Chowdhury, R., & Welsh, J. A. (2015). Sugars and adiposity: The long-term effects of consuming added and naturally occurring sugars in foods and in beverages. *Obesity Science & Practice*, 1(1), 41-49.

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¹⁰ Restaurant Business (2022). "A look at which chains stood out in 2021." Available at: <https://www.restaurantbusinessonline.com/financing/look-which-chains-stood-out-2021>

¹¹ Dunkin' Donuts (n.d.) "Nutrition." Available at: <https://www.dunkindonuts.com/en/menu/nutrition>

¹² Center for Science in the Public Interest (2021). "New York added sugars warning label poll." Available at <https://www.cspinet.org/resource/new-york-added-sugars-warning-label-poll>

¹³ New York Law School Racial Justice Project., "Unshared Bounty: How Structural Racism Contributes to the Creation and Persistence of Food Deserts. (with American Civil Liberties Union)." (2012). Racial Justice Project. Book 3.

¹⁴ Kwate, N. O. A., Yau, C. Y., Loh, J. M., & Williams, D. (2009). Inequality in obesigenic environments: Fast food density in New York City. *Health & Place*, 15(1), 364-373.

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¹⁵ Johnson, N., Vazquez, A., Pond, C., Rivera, C. & Popa, L. (2019). *Growing food equity in New York City: A City Council agenda*. New York City Council. Available at: <http://council.nyc.gov/data/wp-content/uploads/sites/73/2019/08/growing-food-equity-1.pdf>

¹⁶ Harris, J.L., Fleming-Milici, F., Phaneuf, L., Jensen, M., Choi, Y.Y., McCann, M., et al. (2021). Fast food facts 2021: Fast food advertising: Billions in spending, continued high exposure by youth. UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity. Available at <https://media.ruddcenter.uconn.edu/PDFs/FACTS2021.pdf>

¹⁷ CSPI (2021)