

The Health Star Rating (HSR) is a government led front-of-pack labelling system that ranks products on a scale of ½ to 5 stars based on nutrition. The simplicity of it is **the more stars the healthier the choice**.

Its fundamental purpose is to provide convenient, relevant and readily understood nutritional information and/or guidance on food packs to assist busy consumers make informed decisions about food purchases and healthier eating choices. The system is a voluntary scheme, manufacturers can decide whether to use it or not.



The HSR calculator is based on measuring aspects of the food that are associated with:

- Energy (kilojoules)
- Risk nutrients – saturated fat, sodium (salt) and sugars. These nutritional components are linked with increased risk of obesity and chronic disease, such as cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes
- Positive nutrients – dietary fibre, protein and proportion of fruit, vegetable, nut and legume (FCNL) content.

### Key Messages:

- Use the HSR alongside the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating which informs consumers on eating from each of the five food groups
- The HSR is not intended to be used on fresh fruit, vegetables or other unpackaged foods
- Potential positive impact on manufacturers to reformulate their products, cutting salt and sugar, achieving higher ratings
- Voluntary scheme, manufacturers with low ratings often don't include them on their pack
- Can't tell you everything about a food e.g. doesn't look at additives; misses vitamins (B 12) or minor minerals (zinc); how processed and refined it is; or whether it's local-grown
- Other exempt foods are infant nutrition products, catering products, foods for special medical purposes and single ingredient foods such as coffee
- Only compares like with like products e.g. breakfast cereal side by side
- Unprocessed foods such as fruit and vegetables and other core foods, such as dairy, can rate lower than less nutritious packaged options, purely based on the calculation. A piece of fruit, oats or reduced fat milk may not receive 5 stars because it doesn't have the right quantity of nutrients the calculation requires to give it a 5 star rating – yet these are foods we should all be consuming
- Portion size is not taken into account; we consume varied weights of different foods. It is based on 100 g/mL; this is more accurate when comparing like with like products but may not be representative of the serve size consumed.

### HSR and school canteens

Schools across Australia have implemented healthy eating policies based on the Australian Dietary Guidelines and Australian Guide to Healthy Eating. The policies are based on a whole of school approach that includes the canteen. With the exception of New South Wales, all States and Territories use a [Traffic Light \(TL\) system](#) to categorise food and drinks as green, amber or red.

In contrast to the HSR system, the TL system is well understood in the food service environment and by school communities. The current policies in schools, as well as the TL system, are a broader resource that takes into account not only packaged products, but all five food groups, fresh foods and portion sizes.

#### Sources:

Health Star Rating. (2014). About Health Star Ratings. Retrieved from: <http://healthstarrating.gov.au/internet/healthstarrating/publishing.nsf/Content/About-health-stars>

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