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Parents Being Misled into Buying So Called 'Fruit Snacks' Not Permitted in Schools

- 85% of processed fruit snacks contain more sugars per 100g than sweets e.g. Haribo Starmix
- These snacks are a completely unnecessary source of sugars and calories, contributing to tooth decay, obesity and type 2 diabetes and should NOT form part of a child's 5 A Day
- New government urged to set sugar reduction targets immediately

NEW research by **Action on Sugar** has revealed huge amount of hidden sugars in seemingly 'healthy' fruit snacks aimed at children [1], over THREE QUARTERS (85%) of products surveyed (i.e. 80 of the 94 products) contain more sugars than Haribo Starmix (47g/100g) confectionary per 100g [2] – with some containing over 4 teaspoons per portion!

Furthermore, out of all the products surveyed, nearly all (99%) would receive a 'red' colour coded warning on the label for HIGH sugars per 100g [3].

In addition, grossly misleading packaging claims state these fruit snacks can contribute to '1 of your 5' portions of fruit and vegetables a day. However, the new school food standards do not permit schools to offer children these products because they are categorised as 'confectionary' [4]. Therefore food manufacturers must adhere to the same standards to protect our children's health.

Examples of high sugars fruit snacks:

Product Name & Pack Size	Sugars (g) per 100g	Sugars (g) per serving	Teaspoons* of sugar per serving**
The Fruit Factory Sports Mix-Ups 5x18g	81.0	14.6	3.6
Tesco Yogurt Coated Strawberry Fruit Bites 25g	70.1	17.5	4.4
Fruit Bowl Fruit Flakes Raspberry Rush 25g	69.0	17.3	4.3
Whitworths Sunny Raisin Coated Custard Raisins 25g	68.8	17.2	4.3
Organix Goodies Organic Fruit Gummies Strawberry & Apple 12g	67.2	8.1	2.0

* 4 grams of sugar (granulated) is equal to 1 teaspoon of sugar.

** serving size as stated on product packaging

Katharine Jenner, campaign director at Action on Sugar says: "Parents find it hard enough to know what is 'healthy' without food manufacturers confusing matters with misleading claims. Whole, unprocessed fruit is healthier than processed fruit snacks and fruit juice drinks, as it contains vitamins, minerals, water and fibre, and does not cause the devastating tooth decay we see in young children today."

Kawther Hashem, nutritionist at Action on Sugar says: "It's high time food manufacturers stop adding unnecessary sugars and calories to already sweet products [5]. Check the label and if in doubt - eat fresh fruit. Ready sliced fruit in snack pots are better than processed fruit snacks.

"To eat the same number of grams of sugars in a processed fruit snack (18g) your child will have to eat about 240g of strawberries – that's equivalent to a whole punnet!" [6]

With a third of girls (34%) and boys (33%) aged 11-15 years considered overweight or obese [7], and tooth decay currently affecting 27.9% of 5 year olds [8], Action on Sugar is also urging parents to provide children with fresh fruit and vegetables as snacks, instead of the sugar-laden processed fruit snacks.

Graham MacGregor, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Queen Mary University of London and Chairman of Action on Sugar, says: *“The new Conservative government has a tremendous opportunity to take control of public health and reduce the huge burden on the NHS caused by the pandemic of obesity and type 2 diabetes, linked to high sugar intakes. This survey illustrates the fact that the food industry is the cause of this pandemic, by taking something as natural as fruit and ruining it by adding sugar.*

“The new Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt MP, must set sugar reduction targets across the whole of the food industry to gradually reduce the amount of sugar they add to our food. If the food industry does not respond then punitive taxes on these unhealthy products need to be imposed.”

Aubrey Sheiham, Emeritus Professor of Dental Public Health at University College London, says:

“Fruit snacks with these unacceptably high levels of hidden sugars are very likely to cause decay in the hardest tissue in the human body - the teeth. Tooth decay is the most common cause of pain in children and the main reason why children are admitted to hospital. The worldwide epidemic of tooth decay will only be controlled when manufacturers markedly reduce the levels of sugars in their products.”

Ends

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Notes to Editors

Ref 1 - Survey details – full survey sorted by highest sugars per 100g

- 94 products from UK retailers - Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's, Waitrose, The Co-operative, Ocado, Marks & Spencer, Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl and Holland & Barrett.
- Products surveyed included fruit leathers, flakes, gums, chews, and coated dried fruit. Products excluded included melts, flavoured dried fruit, fruit crisps and fruit puree because they are not classed as confectionary by the School Food Standards.
- Children's Fruit-snacks were defined as any products with packaging that would appeal to children and contained processed fruit or fruit juices in the ingredients list, with claims such as '1 of your 5 a day' and 'suitable for lunchboxes'.
- Both supermarket own and branded products were included.
- Where possible, data was collected in store or online via the supermarket's website.
- The survey was carried out during April 2015 and products checked week commencing 14th May 2015

Ref 2 – Haribo Starmix contains 47g sugars per 100g

<http://www.tesco.com/groceries/product/details/?id=251108921>

Ref 3 - Colour coding based on new front of pack colour-coded nutrition labelling criteria:

Sugars - Red >22.5g/100g, Amber >5.1≤22.5g/100g, Green ≤5g/100g

Ref 4 - The current school food standards do not permit schools to offer children processed fruit bars because they are categorised as confectionary - <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/School-Food-Standards-Guidance-FINAL-V3.pdf>

Definition of fruit bars by School Food Plan - Fruit bars made solely from compacted dried fruit are permitted in schools. Dried fruit contains sugar in the cells, which is less damaging to teeth than the added sugar in confectionery. Fruit bars that have been processed or extruded into a 'leather' texture are classed as confectionery and are not permitted in schools. This type of processing releases the sugar from the cell walls so it can do more damage to teeth - <http://www.schoolfoodplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Standards-Consultation-QA-6-March-2014.pdf>

Ref 5 - Of the products where ingredients were collected, 36% (25 of the 70) contained added sugars (honey/sugar (sucrose)/glucose-fructose syrup) and 59% of the products contained a fruit ingredient from concentrate (e.g. apple juice from concentrate).

Ref 6 – Tesco British Strawberries contains 6g sugars per 100g, whereas processed fruit snacks from concentrate contains as much as 81g of sugars per 100g. <http://www.tesco.com/groceries/Product/Details/?id=268905222>

Ref 7 - The Health Survey for England 2012, children's BMI, overweight and obesity. Available: <http://www.hscic.gov.uk/catalogue/PUB13218>

Ref 8 - Public Health England prepared by Davies G, Neville J, Rooney E (2012). *National Dental epidemiology Programme for England: oral health survey of five-year-old children 2012. A report on the prevalence and severity of dental decay.*