

New poll finds low carb and sugar claims on alcohol products create 'health halo'

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A new poll shows 'low carb' and 'low sugar' claims on alcoholic products may mislead some people to believe that alcohol is 'healthy'.

The poll, conducted for Alcohol Change Australia, found that the number of people who understood that alcohol is unhealthy fell from 48% to 40% when a low carb claim was added onto an alcoholic product, and further fell to 37%, when a low sugar claim was added.

Concerningly, one in five poll respondents said that if they saw a low sugar claim on an alcoholic drink, they would drink more of that product.

Hannah Pierce, Executive Officer for Alcohol Change Australia, said the poll results show claims about low carb and sugar content on alcohol products create a 'health halo'.

"Alcohol companies use a wide range of marketing tactics, including low carb and sugar claims, to drive sales of its unhealthy products," Ms Pierce said.

"We don't want people who drink alcohol being misled into thinking that it's healthy, when it's not. Regardless of the carbohydrate or sugar content of an alcoholic product, alcohol remains a Group 1 carcinogen and is linked to over 200 disease and injury conditions," Ms Pierce explained.

The poll findings come as Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) considers submissions to a proposal to clarify requirements in the Food Standards Code around carbohydrate and sugar claims on alcoholic products.

The Code currently allows carbohydrate claims on alcohol and because sugar is a component of carbohydrate, alcohol companies have interpreted the Code as permitting sugar claims. At the request of Australian and New Zealand food ministers, FSANZ is seeking to provide clarity on what claims can be made around carbohydrate and sugar content.

In a submission to FSANZ, Alcohol Change Australia is calling for changes to the Code that would prevent alcohol companies from making claims about the carbohydrate or sugar content of a product.

"Claims like 'low carb' or 'low sugar' are marketing tools, not legitimate sources of nutritional information. Australians should instead be able to access necessary information including the number of standard drinks and total energy content in an alcoholic product," Ms Pierce explained.

"Unfortunately, unlike most other food or drinks in Australia, alcohol products are exempt from providing information about energy content. FSANZ is also considering this issue and we hope to see standardised, mandated, and evidence-informed energy labels on all alcohol products soon," Ms Pierce concluded.

A summary of the poll is [available here](#).

About Alcohol Change Australia

Alcohol Change Australia is a group of health and community organisations from across Australia working together to prevent and reduce harm from alcohol among Australian individuals, families, and communities. For more information, visit www.alcoholchangeaus.org.au.