

# Frequently Asked Questions

# **Slimming Foods**

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## What are “Slimming Foods”?

“Foods intended for weight control”, also known as “slimming foods”, are foods that help people control their weight, including overweight or obese people. These carefully formulated and nutritionally balanced products guarantee that consumers will receive the same level of essential nutrients despite important energy restriction in the diet. The profile of these products is designed to maintain a healthy diet, ensuring adequate macro and micronutrients intakes: both in terms of quantity and quality. Slimming foods can also give people confidence in their own progress and can help them achieve their ultimate goal of returning to a balanced diet, a better lifestyle, and a healthy weight. These foods can be used with the help of a healthcare professional.

## What different forms can slimming foods take and why are there so many?

Different forms of slimming foods are available within the different categories, in different tastes, textures and product forms, making it easier to follow the diet while maximising the chance of success.

- Flavoured powders (in tins, single dose, sachets) for preparation of shakes, soups, custards, etc.;
- Ready to drink shakes and ready to eat dishes;
- Cereal and flavoured bars;
- Snacks.

The largest possible range of slimming foods have been developed considering the technological constraints, the nutritional needs and the nutritional regulatory criteria. Variety is key for the success in the compliance to restricted diets. The challenge of slimming foods industry is to work on acceptability of their products in term of taste, cost and variety.

## What benefits do these products bring to consumers?

- Efficient weight loss: Slimming foods allow consumers to lose weight in safe slimming rhythms and/or to maintain weight after weight loss. A proper slimming rhythm is more likely to help maintain weight loss on the long term, and avoid a “yo-yo effect”. Some popular diets which are not nutritionally balanced may produce dramatic initial weight losses, which cannot be sustained in the long term, and are usually associated with negative side effects. Studies also show that adherence to a diet using slimming foods is usually higher than diets with the same calorie amount but exclusively based on conventional food<sup>1</sup>. This is why using slimming foods is so efficient.
- Safe products: For decades and due to their specific composition, slimming foods have been proven to be totally safe when used properly. The complete and well balanced nutritional profile of slimming foods guarantees their safe use, whereas this is not always possible to achieve with popular diets based on conventional food and restricted in calories (less than 1200). Indeed, due to imbalanced macro- and micronutrient intake, some popular diets have shown to produce significant side effects, even when used properly (such as increased cardiovascular risk or hepatic damage<sup>2</sup>;

<sup>1</sup> Wadden TA, Butryn ML, Byrne KJ. Efficacy of lifestyle modification for long-term weight control. *Obes Res.* 2004 Dec;12 Suppl:151S-62S. Review ; EFSA Panel on Dietetic Products, Nutrition and Allergies (NDA); Scientific Opinion on the substantiation of health claims related to meal replacements for weight control (as defined in Directive 96/8/EC on energy restricted diets for weight loss) and reduction in body weight (ID 1417), and maintenance of body weight after weight loss (ID 1418) pursuant to Article 13(1) of Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006. *EFSA Journal* 2010; 8(2):1466. [19 pp.]. doi:10.2903/j.efsa.2010.1466. Available online: [www.efsa.europa.eu](http://www.efsa.europa.eu). Heymsfield SB, van Mierlo CA, van der Knaap HC, Heo M and Frier HI, 2003. Weight management using a meal replacement strategy: meta and pooling analysis from six studies. *International Journal of Obesity and Related Metabolic Disorders*, 27, 537-549.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.bda.uk.com/news/111117CelebDiets.html> and Agence nationale de sécurité sanitaire de l'alimentation, de l'environnement et du travail. Évaluation des risques liés aux pratiques alimentaires d'amaigrissement. *Rapport d'expertise collective. Édition scientifique Novembre 2010.*

- Convenient products for the purpose of weight control : slimming foods are developed to meet particular nutritional needs of a balanced slimming diets: the portion, the nutritional composition, the specific instructions of use help consumers to control their weight without complex calculation of calories, of level and quality of protein, levels of essential fatty acids, levels of vitamins and minerals. By this simplified way, slimming foods reinforce the chance to respect a balanced restricted diet to the benefice of consumers;
- Costs/benefits: Economically accessible to a majority of consumers despite their high nutritional quality, slimming foods meal replacements' cost is less than a meal in a fast food.

### **What types of micronutrients do slimming foods have?**

Slimming foods are formulated with specific and mandatory minimum levels of vitamins and minerals contents to prevent risk of deficiency due to energy restricted diets.

- Total diet replacement (TDR): "All is in the box": One day of total daily replacement provides adequate amounts of all essential micronutrients for the day.
- Meal replacement for weight control: The content of meal replacements in micronutrients is a safety level and represents a significant part of Nutritional reference values. Consumers are generally advised to take one or two meal replacements per day, according to their objectives, weight maintenance in the first case and weight loss in the second one. The total daily intake is completed by consumption of conventional healthy and balanced food in the rest of the diet.

### **What role can slimming foods play in the context of obesity, a key public health concern?**

Obesity is commonly regarded as one of the most serious public health concerns of the 21st century, representing a major preventable cause of chronic illness and death. At both International and EU level obesity has been identified as a main risk factor for a number of serious diseases including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, metabolic syndrome, certain types of cancer, and even depression, leading to a reduced life expectancy and quality of life.

In Europe, around 50% of consumers are overweight (BMI 25-30) and more than 20% are obese (BMI>30). This shows that there is a worsening trend of inappropriate diets and low physical activity levels across the region.

Dieting is a recognised pillar for the treatment of obesity, but it is essential that consumers have access to the right information and products in order to effectively manage their nutritional needs and to safely reach their individual objectives for the necessary or intended weight loss. Slimming foods provide this type of information and an adequate nutritional composition.

This information is not only instructions of use of these slimming foods but also when diet is not exclusively composed of slimming foods the right way to combine slimming foods and normal foods in balanced daily diets.

### **What type of information is provided on the labels of slimming foods to help consumers understand how to use these products?**

Slimming foods provide specific labelling information so that consumers have access to the right information on the individual product and its use, helping them to effectively manage their nutritional needs. In accordance with the current EU rules, and as recommended by healthcare professionals, slimming foods bear:

- Specific instructions of use, with different steps necessary for successful weight loss/control;
- Indication of the specific conditions where medical supervision is necessary, especially if used over a prolonged period of time;

- Any relevant warning statement such as the need to consume enough liquid or informing certain types of consumers to avoid slimming diets without consulting a medical professional;
- For total daily replacements, a statement that the product provides adequate amounts of all essential nutrients for the day;
- In case of meal replacements, a statement to the effect that the products are useful for their intended use only as part of an energy-restricted diet and that other foodstuffs should be a necessary part of the diet as well.

### **How are slimming foods regulated at EU level?**

In order to protect consumers and to guarantee a safe and efficient weight loss/ control, slimming products need to comply with the following specific EU rules:

- Regulation (EU) No 609/2013 on food intended for infants and young children, food for special medical purposes, and total diet replacement for weight control. This regulation does not cover meal replacement, which will fall under general food law regulation.
- Regulation (EU) No 2016/1413 establishing a list of permitted health claims made on foods, other than those referring to the reduction of disease risk and to children's development and health. This regulation includes authorisation for health claims related to weight loss and weight maintenance for meal replacements with conditions of use specifying what these meal replacements are.

### **Approved EU Health Claims**

Scientific evidence forms the basis for designing and manufacturing these products. For this reason, the two following claims have been approved for meal replacements on the basis of Regulation (EU) No 2016/1413:

- "Substituting one of the main daily meals of an energy restricted diet with a meal replacement contributes to the maintenance of weight after weight loss"; and
- "Substituting two of the main daily meals of an energy restricted diet with meal replacements contributes to weight loss".

#### **About SNE**

Specialised Nutrition Europe (SNE) is the voice of the specialised nutrition industry across Europe.

We cover 5 different food categories: Foods for infants and young children, Foods for special medical purposes, Foods for weight control, Sports food, and Gluten free products. Learn more about SNE [here](#).