

Frequently Asked Questions on “Foods for Special Dietary Uses”

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) related to nutrition labelling of “foods for special dietary uses” on the CFS website are captured below for easy reference.

The full set of FAQ is available from the following website-

http://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/programme/programme_nifl/programme_nifl_faq.html

1.5 What is food for special dietary use? "Updated in December 2011"

Food for special dietary use is those specially processed or formulated to satisfy particular dietary requirements which exist because of a particular physical or physiological condition and/or specific disease and disorders and which are presented as such. The composition of these food stuffs must differ significantly from the composition of ordinary foods of comparable nature, if such ordinary foods exist. It should be noted that the presentation of the product as a food for special dietary use needs to observe relevant provisions in other existing law of Hong Kong, including the Undesirable Medical Advertisements Ordinance (Cap. 231) and general food labeling requirements.

1.6 What are the examples of “food for special dietary uses”? "Updated in October 2011"

Without contravening the principles mentioned in Q1.5, the following products are generally considered as food for special dietary uses-

- (i) products that must always be used under medical supervision and is presented as such (if medical supervision is only required under certain circumstances, e.g., product with statements such as ” for children under age of 3, use under medical supervision

only” or “use under medical supervision if use as sole source of nutrition”, the product does not fall into this category);

(ii) products solely for tube feeding; and

(iii) products that are specially formulated for certain patients or physical conditions and is clearly presented as such, e.g., with statement "specially formulated for cancer patients" (products only marked with "suitable for xx patients" may not fall into this category).

For example, milk specially formulated for pregnant women and lactating mothers and presented as such are considered as food for special dietary uses. On the other hand, protein powder products that are for general population are not considered as food for special dietary uses.

More examples on food for special dietary uses are provided in Q1.12 and 1.13.

1.12 A product is targeted to a particular group of consumers. Is it considered as food for special dietary uses? "Updated in October 2011"

If a product is targeted to a particular group of consumers (e.g., the elderly population) only as marketing strategy, but the composition is not significantly different from ordinary food, or if the product is added with nutrients which is of interest to a particular group of consumers who actually do not have special requirement on these nutrients as compared to the general population, the product is not considered as a food for special dietary use. In any case, a product is considered as a food for special dietary uses only when the principles mentioned in Q1.5 are satisfied. Q1.13 below provides further example on the classification of food for special dietary uses.

1.13 What other products are not considered as food for special dietary uses? "Updated in October 2011"

In addition to the products mentioned in Q1.6 and 1.12, it should

be noted that products to be classified as food for special dietary uses should not have any information or advertisement suggesting or implying that the product is also recommended or suitable for the general population or other population subgroups which do not have that specific disease or condition (e.g., “for health-conscious people”, “for maintaining well-being and help you stay energetic”, “for picky-eaters”). In any cases, products would be classified as food for special dietary uses only if the principles mentioned in Q1.5 are satisfied. In case of uncertainty, relevant information for individual products will be considered to see whether such products are considered as food for special dietary uses.

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