

Broken Plate Report 2021: Breakfast cereals with packaging that may appeal to children

Conducted in April - May 2021



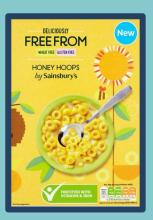










Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Method	3
Results	5
Calories	5
Sugar	5
Salt	6
Saturated Fat	8
Fibre	
Examples of Healthier Options	11
Direct Comparison of Products Over Time	11
Cereals Surveyed in 2020 and 2021	
Cereals Surveyed 2019 - 2021	
A note on retailers removing cartoon characters	13
Data Limitations	14
Conclusion	14
References	15
About us	15



Introduction

Breakfast cereals can be a highly nutritious breakfast choice, providing a source of key nutrients such as energy, fibre, vitamins, and minerals to the diet. However, many can also contain excessive levels of sugar, salt, and saturated fat, all of which contribute to raised blood pressure and increased risk of developing obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

The latest data from the National Diet & Nutrition Survey (NDNS) (2014-2019) shows that breakfast cereals contribute approximately 6% to the total energy intake of 1.5 - 10 year olds, and 5% of 11 - 18 year olds. Information regarding breakfast cereals and their contribution to total free sugars, salt, and fibre intake for 1.5 - 3 year olds and 4 - 10 year olds is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Percentage contribution of breakfast cereals to the total free sugar, salt, and fibre intake of children, categorised by age¹

Age group	% Contribution to total free sugars intake	% Contribution to total salt intake	% Contribution to total fibre intake
1.5 - 3 years	8%	3%	11%
4 - 10 years	8%	4%	9%

(Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number)

Food and drink manufacturers and retailers use cartoon characters and animations on the front of their breakfast cereals to make them eye-catching and attractive to children, who often then 'pester' their parents into purchasing the cereal. There are currently restrictions in place regarding online and television advertising and marketing of foods high in fat, salt, and sugar, especially during peak viewing times for children². However, these restrictions do not yet apply to packaging of products.

Action on Sugar and Action on Salt have been monitoring the level of salt, sugars, saturated fat, and fibre in breakfast cereals over time, as part of the Food Foundation's 'Broken Plate' Report. In 2019, 49% of breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging were high in sugar, 85% were high or medium in salt, and 48% were low in fibre. The key findings from the 2020 report showed some improvement, with 37% of breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging high in sugar, 59% high or medium in salt and 38% low in fibre. The 2021 study follows on to identify if there are any further changes.

Method

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and government restrictions, Action on Salt and Action on Sugar collected most of the data online via retailer websites, except for Aldi and Lidl which were collected instore. Data was collected between April and May 2021 and a total of 9 major supermarkets were included: Aldi, ASDA, Lidl, Ocado (which covers Marks & Spencer's), Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco, The Co-operative and Waitrose. Data for all cereal products available in store according to the retailers' websites was obtained online and inputted onto an Excel spreadsheet. In the case of Aldi and Lidl, breakfast cereals which met the inclusion criteria were purchased and nutrition data inputted onto the Excel spreadsheet.

The collected data then underwent inclusion and exclusion criteria for what would be deemed 'child friendly packaging' based on previous Action on Sugar and Action on Salt surveys and other literature³.

Inclusion:

- Child friendly imagery (such as cartoon characters)
- Child friendly style (such as bright colours, animated)
- Child friendly brand character (such as Tony the Tiger)
- Child friendly font (such as balloon letters and child friendly fronts)
- Child friendly media partnerships (such as Disney)
- Child friendly offers (such as a free game)
- Child themed language (such as 'made for kids')
- Child friendly activities (such as wordsearches on the back of pack)

Exclusion:

- Animations that are part of company logos
- Non child-themed lifelike drawings (such as pencil like drawings or sketches)
- Duplicates of the same product, in but in different packaging sizes

Figure 1 - Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Out of 515 cereals available in retail, 126 products met the inclusion criteria and were assessed against the Government's Front of Pack nutrition labelling guidance⁴ to note how many products were high, medium, or low in sugar, salt, and saturated fat. In addition to this, a scoring system was created for fibre based on previous reports. Comparisons between cereals collected in 2019 and 2020 have been made, where possible.

Colour Code	Green	Amber	Red
Saturates	≤1.5g/100g	>1.5g to ≤5.0g/100g	>5.0g/100g
(Total) Sugars	≤5.0/100g	>5.0g to ≤22.5g/100g	>22.5g/100g
Salt	≤0.3g/100g	>0.3g to ≤1.5g/100g	>1.5g/100g
Fibre	≥10g/100g	≥5g to <10g/100g	<5g/100g

Table 2 – Nutrition labelling criteria for 100g of food

Results

A total of 126 breakfast cereals met the inclusion criteria.

Key findings:

- 29% were high in sugar (37% in 2020 and 49% in 2019)
- 60% were high or medium in salt (59% in 2020 and 86% in 2019)
- 45% were low in fibre (38% in 2020 and 48% in 2019).

Calories

In 2021, the average calorie content per 100g was 394kcal/100g and has remained steady across the years (393kcal/100g in 2020 and 394kcal/100g in 2019).

Sugar

Just under a third (29%) of cereals with packaging that was deemed child friendly were considered high (red) in sugar, an improvement from previous years (37% in 2020 and 49% in 2019).

This reduction in sugar has meant a shift away from red labels on front of pack, and an increase in the number of products with medium (amber) levers of sugar. In 2021 the number of products deemed medium in sugar increased by 8 percentage points since 2020 (see Figure 2). However the average sugar content per 100g has only reduced slightly to 18.0g/100g (21.4g/100g in 2019 and 18.4g/100g in 2020).

Figure 2 – Comparison of sugar content in breakfast cereals from 2019-2021, according to nutrition labelling criteria

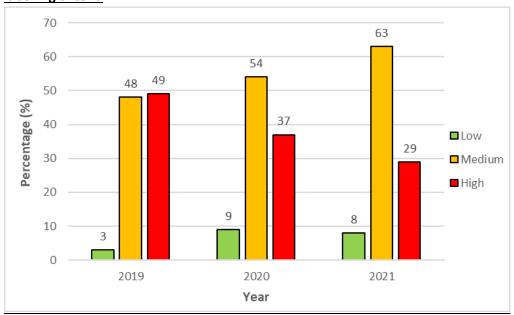






Table 3 - Top 10 highest sugar breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size* (g)	Sugars Per 100g	Sugars Per Serve* (g)
Malt O Meal Marshmallow Mateys	30	40	12
Kellogg's Frosties	30	37	11
Nature's Path Choco Chimps	30	30	9
Nestle Lion Caramel & Chocolate Cereal	30	29	8.7
Kellogg's Krave Choco Roulette	30	29	8.7
Kellogg's Krave Chocolate Hazelnut	30	29	8.7
Mornflake Chocolatey Squares	30	28.9	8.7
Lidl Crownfield Choco Hazelnut Pillows	30	28.5	8.6
Tesco Choco Nut Pillows	30	28.2	8.5
Kellogg's Krave Milk Chocolate	30	28	8.4

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Table 4 - Top 10 lowest sugar breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size* (g)	Sugars Per 100g	Sugars Per Serve* (g)
Tesco Super Smooth Porridge	30	1	0.3
Morrisons Super Smooth Porridge	40	1	0.4
Troo Granola Nutty & Cinnamon	45	2.2	1
Troo Granola Chocolate with Orange	45	2.3	1
Troo Happy Porridge with Flaxseed Omega 3s and Uplifting Cinnamon	50	3.3	1.6
Troo Calm Porridge + with Chamomile & Gentle Ginger	50	3.5	1.7
Troo Energise Porridge with Chocolate & Maca	50	3.8	1.9
Troo Granola Super Berry & Vitamin C	45	4.9	2.2
Aldi Harvest Morn Crisp Rice	30	4.9	1.5
Fruit Bowl Banana Wheat Biscuits	40	5	2

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Salt

Similar to previous reports, *Malt O Meal Marshmallow Mateys* is the only product high in salt, with the total salt content 1.6g salt/100g.

The proportion of products considered low in salt (4 in 10 cereals) remains relatively unchanged since last year. In 2021, the average salt content per 100g of cereals which met the criteria was 0.44g/100g (compared to 0.45g/100g in 2020 and 0.54g/100g in 2019) (see Figure 3).



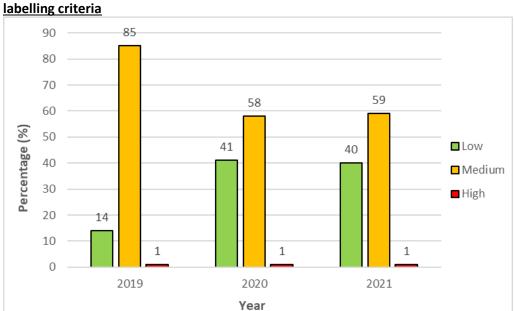


Figure 3 – Comparison of salt content in breakfast cereals from 2019-2021, according to nutrition

Table 5 - Top 10 highest salt breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size* (g)	Salt Per 100g	Salt Per Serve* (g)
Malt O Meal Marshmallow Mateys	30	1.6	0.51
Kellogg's Froot Loops	30	1.13	0.34
Kellogg's Corn Flakes	30	1.13	0.34
Kellogg's Krave Cereal Chocolate, Caramel & Peanut	30	1.1	0.33
Kellogg's Krave Chocolate Hazelnut	30	1.1	0.33
Kellogg's Rice Krispies	30	1	0.3
Kellogg's Krave Milk Chocolate	30	0.95	0.29
Kellogg's Krave Choco Roulette	30	0.95	0.29
Aldi Harvest Morn Craze Milk Chocolate	40	0.94	0.38
Nestle Curiously Cinnamon	30	0.88	0.27

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Table 6 - Top 10 lowest salt breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size* (g)	Salt Per 100g	Salt Per Serve* (g)
Rude Health Honey Spelt Puffs	30	0	0
Morrisons Super Smooth Porridge	40	0	0
Aldi Harvest Morn Golden Puffs	40	0.01	<0.01
Nestle Nat Bears Breakfast Cereal Chocolate	32	0.03	0.01
Nestle Nat Bears Breakfast Cereal Honey	32	0.03	0.01



Troo Energise Porridge with Chocolate & Maca	50	0.03	0.02
Troo Happy Porridge with Flaxseed Omega 3s and	50	0.03	0.01
Uplifting Cinnamon			
Troo Calm Porridge + with Chamomile & Gentle Ginger	50	0.03	0.02
Bear Multigrain Alpha Bites	30	0.04	0.01
Asda Multigrain Hoops	30	0.05	0.02

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Saturated Fat

The average saturated fat content in breakfast cereals has remained low over the years (Figure 4), from 1.2g/100g in 2019 to 1.3g/100g in 2020 and 2021. This year, *Aldi Harvest Morn Cinnamon Chips* was the only cereal considered high in saturated fat, at 5.1g/100g.

<u>Figure 4 – Comparison of saturated fat content in breakfast cereals from 2019-2021, according to nutrition labelling criteria</u>

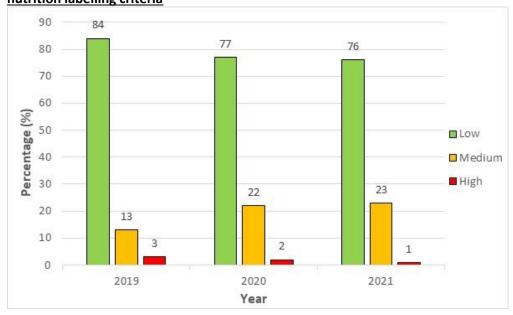


Table 7 - Top 10 highest saturated fat cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size* (g)	Saturated Fat Per 100g	Saturated Fat Per Serve* (g)
Aldi Harvest Morn Cinnamon Chips	40	5.1	2
Aldi Harvest Morn Chocolate Crunch Clusters	45	4.8	2.2
Lidl Crownfield Milk Choco Pillows	30	4.6	1.4
Aldi Harvest Morn Craze Milk Chocolate	40	4.5	1.8
Aldi Harvest Morn Choco Pillows	40	4.2	1.7
Kellogg's Krave Choco Roulette	30	4.1	1.2



Kellogg's Krave Cereal Chocolate, Caramel & Peanut	30	4.1	1.2
Lizi's Adventurers Granola Crispies Banana	30	4.1	1.2
Kellogg's Krave Milk Chocolate	30	4	1.2
Kellogg's Krave Chocolate Hazelnut	30	4	1.2

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Table 8 - Top 10 lowest saturated fat cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size*	Saturated Fat Per 100g	Saturated Fat Per Serve* (g)
Kellogg's Frosties	30	0.1	0.03
Tesco Free From Rice Snaps	30	0.2	<0.1
Sainsburys Deliciously Free From Honey Hoops	30	0.2	<0.1
Tesco Multigrain Hoops	30	0.2	<0.1
Sainsbury's Multigrain Hooplas	30	0.2	<0.1
Aldi Harvest Morn Crisp Rice	30	0.2	0.1
Lidl Crownfield Frosted Flakes	30	0.2	<0.1
Sainsburys Deliciously Free From Rice Pops	30	0.2	<0.1
Kellogg's Corn Flakes	30	0.2	0.1
Aldi Harvest Morn Golden Puffs	40	0.3	0.1

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Fibre

Over 4 in 10 cereals included in this survey were considered low in fibre, compared with only 1 in 10 that were high in fibre. Despite an initial increase from 2019 to 2020 (5.1g/100g to 6.4g/100g), the average fibre content per 100g has remained relatively unchanged in 2021 (6.3g/100g).

Interestingly, our survey found that 6 of the top 10 lowest sugar cereals were also in the top 10 cereals highest in fibre:

- Troo Granola Nutty & Cinnamon
- Troo Granola Chocolate with Orange
- Troo Happy Porridge with Flaxseed Omega 3s and Uplifting Cinnamon
- Troo Calm Porridge with Chamomile & Gentle Ginger
- Troo Energise Porridge with Chocolate & Maca
- Troo Granola Super Berry & Vitamin C





<u>Figure 5 – Comparison of fibre content in breakfast cereals from 2019-2021, according to nutrition labelling criteria</u>

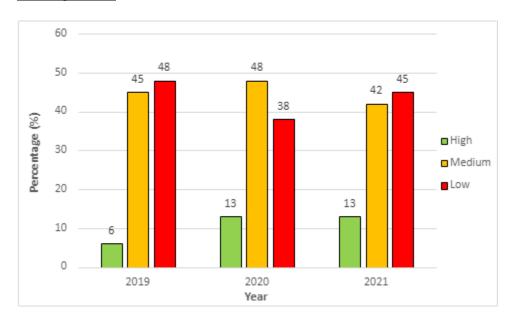


Table 9 - Top 10 lowest fibre cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size* (g)	Fibre Per 100g	Fibre Per Serve* (g)
Morrisons Free From Honey Loops	30	0.9	0.3
Lidl Crownfield Rice Snaps	30	1.1	<0.5
Sainsburys Deliciously Free From Honey Hoops	30	1.4	<0.5
Sainsbury's Rice Pops	30	1.5	<0.5
Tesco Rice Snaps	30	1.6	0.5
Asda Rice Snaps	30	1.6	<0.5
Morrisons Rice Crackles	30	1.6	0.5
Sainsbury's Frosted Flakes	30	1.9	0.6
Kellogg's Frosties	30	2	0.6
Tesco Free From Rice Snaps	30	2	0.6

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Table 10 - Top 10 highest fibre cereals with child friendly packaging

Product Name	Serving Size* (g)	Fibre Per 100g	Fibre Per Serve* (g)
Troo Granola Chocolate with Orange	45	21.4	9.7
Troo Granola Nutty & Cinnamon	45	20.5	9.2
Troo Granola Super Berry & Vitamin C	45	20.2	9.1
Troo Happy Porridge with Flaxseed Omega 3s and Uplifting Cinnamon	50	17	8.5



Troo Energise Porridge with Chocolate & Maca	50	16.8	8.4
Troo Calm Porridge + with Chamomile & Gentle Ginger	50	16.7	8.4
W.K Kellogg Kids Strawberry, Apple & Carrot Multigrain	30	16	4.8
Shapes Cereal			
W.K Kellogg Kids No Added Sugar Blueberry, Apple &	30	16	4.8
Beetroot Multigrain Shapes Cereal			
Aldi Harvest Morn Golden Puffs	40	15.4	6.1
Lidl Crownfield Malt Wheaties	30	13.1	3.9

^{*}Serving size as declared on pack/online

Examples of Healthier Options

In 2021, only 2 breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging had a green label for sugar, salt, saturated fat, and fibre combined:

- Troo Happy Porridge with Flaxseed Omega 3s and Uplifting Cinnamon
- Troo Calm Porridge with Chamomile & Gentle Ginger

Shredded Wheat Bitesize, which was included in the 2020 report and had a green label for sugar, salt, saturated fat, and fibre in 2020, has been rebranded to completely remove child friendly animations on pack and therefore no longer meets the inclusion criteria for this study.

An additional 3 breakfast cereals had a green label for sugar, salt, and saturated fat but not fibre:

- Morrisons Super Smooth Porridge values remain unchanged from last year
- Tesco Super Smooth Porridge
- Fruit Bowl Banana Wheat Biscuits values remain unchanged from last year

Four breakfast cereals had a green label for both sugar and salt, but not saturated fat:

- Troo Granola Nutty & Cinnamon
- Troo Granola Chocolate with Orange values remain unchanged from last year
- Troo Energise Porridge with Chocolate & Maca values remain unchanged from last year
- Troo Granola Super Berry & Vitamin C

Several products which were considered healthier in 2020 were not included in this year's report. *Troo Granola Super Seedy with Calming Ginger, Quaker Kids Porridge Mix-Ups Choco Porridge Combos* and *Quaker Kids Porridge Mix-Ups Strawberry Porridge Combos* were not available online in any retailer at the time of collection and so were assumed to be discontinued.

Direct Comparison of Products Over Time

This 2021 report includes 126 cereals that meet the inclusion criteria, compared to 120 in 2020 and 77 in the 2019 report (data collected in November 2018). The difference in the total number of cereals surveyed each year is likely a result of; new product development, a change in product packaging which falls in or out of scope of the inclusion criteria, and availability in-store and online at the time of data collection.





Cereals Surveyed in 2020 and 2021

Every effort was made to collect comprehensive data for direct comparisons over the years. Out of the 126 cereals included in this study, 101 were matched to cereals included in the 2020 report. When making direct comparisons over the year to assess progress made by manufacturers, very little improvement is seen in the nutritional quality of these cereals:

- The average sugar content per 100g was 19.0g in 2020 and 18.2g in 2021 (4% decrease)
- The average fibre content per 100g was 6.1g in 2020 and 6.2g in 2021 (1.6% increase)
- The average salt content per 100g was 0.46g in 2020 and 0.46g in 2021 (no change)
- The average saturated fat content per 100g was 1.3g in 2020 and 1.3g in 2021 (no change)
- The average calorie content per 100g was 395kcal in 2020 and 393kcal in 2021 (no change)

Breakfast cereals surveyed with the biggest progress in reformulation between 2020 and 2021:

- Sainsbury's have made substantial improvements in their *Choc Hazelnut Squares* cereal, having decreased the saturated fat content by 2g/100g, moving it from a red (5.1g/100g) to an amber (3.1g/100g) label. They have also reduced the sugar content by 9.9g/100g, moving them from a red (29.7g/100g) to an amber (19.8g/100g) label.
- Aldi's Harvest Morn Choco Pillows and Harvest Morn Chocolate Crunch Clusters have reduced their sugar content by 8.5g/100g and 8g/100g respectively, moving them both from a red to an amber label.
- Tesco Honey Hoops have decreased in salt by 0.4g/100g, moving it from an amber (0.6g/100g) to a green (0.2g/100g) label.
- Aldi Harvest Morn Choco Hoops have decreased their calorie content by 42kcal/100g, (387kcal/100g in 2020 to 345kcal/100g in 2021), and their Harvest Morn Crisp Rice have decreased in calorie content by 38kcal/100g (383kcal/100g in 2020 to 345kcal/100g in 2021).

Breakfast cereals with the least progress in reformulation between 2020 and 2021:

- Lidl Crownfield Choco Shells has decreased fibre content by 2g, from 8.5g/100g to 6g/100g
- Asda Choco Nut Squares has increased in salt content by 0.36g from 0.05g/100g to 0.41g/100g

Cereals Surveyed 2019 - 2021

The average sugar, saturated fat, salt, and fibre content for 55 breakfast cereals surveyed since 2019 have been compared to identify any changes across this time (see Figure 6).

- The average sugar content has reduced from 21.1g/100g to 19.3g/100g (8.5% decrease)
- The average saturated fat content has reduced from 1.3g/100g to 1.1g/100g (15% decrease)
- The average salt content has remained relatively steady, 0.56g/100g to 0.53g/100g (5% decrease)
- The average fibre content has increased slightly from 5.1g/100g to 5.5g/100g (8% increase)





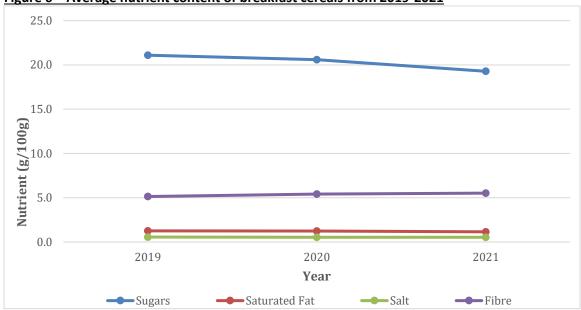


Figure 6 – Average nutrient content of breakfast cereals from 2019-2021

A note on retailers removing cartoon characters

Recent commitments made by companies to remove cartoon characters from their packaging have meant that several brands of cereal were not included in this year's report. This includes Nestle's *Shreddies* range, *Shredded Wheat Bitesize* and *Multigrain Cheerios*. Lidl, Aldi, and Tesco have also rebranded some of their own-brand cereals to have simpler packaging.

This year we have identified several cereals with improved, plainer packaging. But despite the removal of cartoons from some retailers and manufacturers, packaging has still been designed with animated text, backgrounds, and similarly attractive designs, which makes them stand out from other cereals plainer packaging (Figure 7).

Figure 7. A snapshot of cereals available in Tesco, and the difference in packaging style across difference ranges







Data Limitations

It is worth noting that the information provided in this report is product level data and has not been matched with sales data, due to limited access to resources.

Due to the current restrictions we had to rely on online data for our study, and as such there are some limitations to note. The data was collected manually and thus there is the potential for human error, however steps were taken to ensure accuracy throughout, with thorough spot checking to minimise inputting errors. Another limitation to note is the exclusion of products marked 'out of stock' online. Without an alternative source to verify if the product was discontinued or temporarily out of stock, it was assumed that the online market is reflective of what is available in store, and therefore was assumed they were no longer available. It is also difficult to determine the accuracy of data presented online and whether it is regularly updated by the manufacturers or retailers. This also applied to images provided online for packaging, as we had to assume these were recent to determine whether the product met our strict inclusion criteria. We were able to cross check some products in store to give a good indication whether the images were up to date, but we were unable to spot check every single cereal due to the current restrictions.

Conclusion

In recent years there has been a particular focus to improve the nutritional quality of breakfast cereals, given its popularity with children, and its potential to be a quick, easy and nutritious meal centre. Our previous report found a positive shift to more green labels on front of pack across the board, as well as significant improvements in fibre, salt, and sugar content. When comparing the latest data to findings from previous years however, that progress appears to have stagnated, with little change in fibre, saturate fat or salt. The biggest improvement can be seen in sugar content, with fewer products considered high in sugar. What is concerning is only 2 breakfast cereals with child friendly packaging tick all the boxes for a healthy breakfast choice, indicating that there is still room for improvement.

In recent years, companies have publicly committed to improve the nutritional content of their breakfast cereal offering. This year, Kellogg's announced plans to reduce the sugar content of their children's cereals by 10% and salt content by 20%. In addition, Nestle have committed to updating their nutrition and health strategy to meet the industry standards for health⁷. Several retailers have also committed to removing cartoon characters from their packaging (Asda, Co-op, Tesco, Sainsbury's, Lidl, and Aldi). Our report however shows that cartoon characters have, in many cases, been replaced with packaging that is equally appealing to children.

Going forward, when companies remove cartoon characters, we want to see the packaging in line with their other ranges, that does not attract children. This coupled with the continual reduction of sugar, salt, and saturated fat, and increase in fibre, will hopefully result in children and parents choosing healthier,

more nutritious breakfast options. Unless all cereal manufacturers commit to removing child-friendly images from their packaging, it will never be a level playing field for the more responsible manufacturers.

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About us

Action on Salt and Action on Sugar are groups concerned with salt and sugar and its effects on health, supported by 24 expert scientific members. Action on Salt and Action on Sugar are successfully working to reach a consensus with the food industry and Government over the harmful effects of a high salt and sugar diet and bring about a reduction in the amount of salt and sugar in processed foods as well as added to cooking, and at the table.

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