

FDA releases sweeping calorie labeling rules

By Lindsay Abrams, Salon

All those foods that will basically kill you as soon as you order them? Now they're at least going to have to warn you first.

The Food and Drug Administration, after much delay, has finally released its national calorie labeling requirements. As mandated under the Affordable Care Act, the rules, which go into effect one year from now, will require chain restaurants and other food establishments with 20 or more locations to post calorie counts on their menus.

Here's what it will look like:

When you sit down at a restaurant, you'll be able to see how many calories each item contains. If you drive through for take-out, the calories will be there, too. Ordering pizza for delivery? Despite big pizza's best efforts to fight it, calories will be listed by the slice. The prepared food offered at grocery stores is covered, too, an inclusion that the National Grocers Association finds "disappointing." Buying a snack from a vending machine? You'll have to be able to see the labels before you make your selection. Your deli sandwiches, salad bars, salads, scoops of ice cream and bakery muffins? Check, check, check and check. Even movie theater popcorn, long a Trojan horse for unexpected calories, will be labeled. And, in a move that surprised some food policy experts (in a good way), so will alcoholic beverages – at least, those that are listed on menus (drinks mixed at bars are exempted).

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