



SHAPE UP AMERICA!

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New Research Shows Public Wants Alcohol Content Listed On Labels for Beer, Wine and Distilled Spirits

*Top Priority for Consumers Is Knowing Amount of Alcohol in Each Drink;
Data to Be Sent to Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB)*

Washington, DC; January 22, 2008 – As the Treasury Department’s Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) considers public comments on proposed rules to require standardized labeling information on beer, wine and distilled spirits, a new survey filed today as part of the public record underscores the importance of mandating detailed information about the alcohol content of these products – something TTB’s current proposals do not require.

Conducted for Shape Up America!, by Penn, Schoen and Berland’s (PSB) Internet Surveys Group (ISG), the online survey of 503 adult Americans aged 18 and over provides compelling evidence that consumers want complete labeling information on alcoholic beverages, including the percentage of alcohol by volume, the serving size, the amount of alcohol per serving, the definition of a “standard drink,” and the number of standard drinks per container. In fact, eight in ten of those polled (79 percent) agreed with the statement: “There is no point in having labeling on the containers of alcohol beverages unless labels include all nutrition and ingredient information, including the amount of alcohol in each drink.”

“Today, even the most basic information about alcohol beverages is not required to be provided on the labels of most alcohol beverage products,” said Barbara J. Moore, Ph.D., president of Shape Up America!, “It’s time to give consumers complete and detailed information about the alcohol content and number of calories in all beverage alcohol products so they can make informed and responsible purchasing and consumption decisions. Anything less is hardly a victory for public health.”

According to the new survey, consumers rank “the amount of alcohol in each drink” as the top priority (92 percent) for required information on an alcohol label followed by information about the calorie content (84 percent). Considered less important on the label is the amount of carbohydrates (75 percent), fat (71 percent) and protein (66 percent), although consumers also value this information.

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At the same time, the survey documents widespread public support for using alcohol labels to educate consumers about following the *Dietary Guidelines*' advice on moderate drinking, which is defined as up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks a day for men. Specifically, most Americans (79 percent) say they would support alcohol labeling that summarizes the *Dietary Guidelines* advice. Moreover, because the definition of a standard drink is not well known by the public, more than four in five surveyed (81 percent) say it would be helpful to know that government defines a standard drink as containing 0.6 fluid ounces of pure alcohol, which translates into 12 fluid ounces of regular beer, 5 fluid ounces of wine, or 1.5 fluid ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

“Although TTB believes this amount of information will confuse consumers, our survey clearly shows that when it comes to labeling information, consumers are savvy about using labels as information tools,” said Dr. Moore. “There is an immediate need for clear and complete information on alcohol labels and consumers should have access to it as soon as possible.”

The online survey also asked respondents to review three alternative labels that could be placed on alcohol beverage containers, giving TTB a better idea of what information consumers find most useful. When asked to compare the different options, the results were dramatic: the vast majority (76 percent) opted for a label that combines the information required under TTB's proposed rulemaking (the amount of calories, carbohydrates, fat and protein) with the amount of alcohol per serving and the statement “a standard drink contains 0.6 fluid ounces of alcohol.” In contrast, only 7 percent chose the format proposed under TTB's rulemaking.

In line with the public's thinking, a number of leading nutrition, public health and consumer organizations and academic institutions have submitted comments to TTB, all calling on the agency to combine information about calories, carbohydrates, fat and protein with the following meaningful information about the alcohol content of beer, wine and distilled spirits:

- The serving size, *i.e.*, 12 fluid ounces (fl oz) for beer, 5 fl oz for wine, and 1.5 fl oz for distilled spirits;
- The amount of alcohol (expressed in fluid ounces or grams per serving);
- The definition of a “standard drink;”
- The number of standard drinks per container; and
- A summary of the recommendation contained in *The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005*, which defines moderate drinking as no more than 2 drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women.

TTB's proposed rulemaking comes at a time when half of adult Americans consume alcoholic beverages. According to the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, an estimated 55 percent of adults are drinkers and would benefit from easy access to standardized labeling information on beer, wine and distilled spirits products.

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In 2003, the National Consumers League joined with the Center for Science in the Public Interest and 75 other public health and consumer organizations in submitting a formal petition to TTB to require an “Alcohol Facts” panel on the labels of all alcohol beverage products. This resulted in TTB issuing an advance notice of proposed rulemaking in April 2005 and then in July 2007, publishing proposed rules to require a “Serving Facts” on the labels of beer, wine and distilled spirits. While the proposed rules would require manufacturers to list the amount of calories, carbohydrates, fat and protein in a standardized manner, TTB’s proposal specifically leaves out any information about the alcohol content on these products.

About Shape Up America!

Shape Up America! was founded in 1994 by former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to raise awareness of the health effects of obesity and to provide responsible information on weight management to the public and to health care professionals. The organization maintains an award winning website – www.shapeup.org – accessed by more than 100,000 visitors each month and an “opt-in” free e-newsletter with more than 20,000 subscribers.

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