



# HEALTHY SNAP

SNAP HEALTHY CHOICES RETAILER OPERATIONAL HANDBOOK

# Overview

In collaboration with the United States Department of Agriculture, the state of Florida is implementing changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) that exclude soda, energy drinks, candy, and ultra-processed shelf stable prepared desserts from eligible purchases. This policy shift aims to promote healthier food choices among SNAP recipients by restricting items that are high in sugar and low in nutritional value. Retailers participating in SNAP must ensure compliance with these new guidelines by updating their point-of-sale systems and making staff aware of the revised product eligibility rules. These adjustments will require coordination with the Florida Department of Children and Families (Department) and adherence to updated regulations to maintain program integrity.

To implement these changes effectively, retailers should update their point-of-sale systems to prevent restricted products from being purchased using SNAP benefits. This may involve working with payment processors to adjust Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) settings and ensuring that checkout systems correctly flag ineligible items. Clear signage and informational materials should be displayed in stores to communicate the policy update and minimize confusion at checkout.

Retailers must also stay informed about compliance requirements and enforcement measures to avoid penalties or disruptions in their SNAP participation. Regular audits will be conducted to ensure adherence to the new guidelines, and retailers should maintain open communication with the Department for guidance and support. By proactively implementing these changes, retailers can help facilitate a smooth transition while continuing to serve SNAP recipients effectively. For further details on compliance and implementation, including guidance and tools for retailers, visit [myflfamilies.com/HealthySNAP](https://myflfamilies.com/HealthySNAP).

# Which Products Are No Longer SNAP-Eligible Items?

Soda, energy drinks, candy, and ultra-processed shelf-stable prepared desserts will no longer be available for purchase with SNAP benefits in Florida.

## Soda

“Soda” means a beverage that is made with carbonated water and that is flavored or sweetened with added sugar or artificial sweeteners such as corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, aspartame, and sucrose. “Soda” does not include carbonated water which is plain or naturally flavored or any beverage that is greater than 50 percent vegetable or fruit juice by volume, or that contains less than five grams of added sugar.

The following list of examples is not exhaustive and will vary based on each retailer’s inventory. Retailers should use the checklist below to help identify other excluded products.

<b>✗ Ineligible Items</b>	<b>✓ SNAP-Eligible Items</b>
<p>Regular Soda like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 7 Up®</li><li>• Canada Dry®</li><li>• Coca-Cola®</li><li>• Dr. Pepper®</li></ul> <p>Diet Soda like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Diet Pepsi®</li><li>• Diet Coke®</li><li>• Diet Mountain Dew®</li><li>• Diet Mr. Pibb®</li></ul> <p>Zero Sugar Soda like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Coke Zero®</li><li>• Sprite Zero®</li><li>• Fanta Orange Zero®</li><li>• Starry Zero Sugar®</li></ul> <p>All other similar carbonated and sweetened beverages like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sparkling Ice®</li></ul>	<p>Carbonated/Sparkling water like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pellegrino®</li><li>• Perrier®</li><li>• Poppi®</li><li>• LaCroix®</li><li>• Polar Seltzer</li><li>• Schweppes®</li><li>• Waterloo®</li><li>• Poland Spring®</li><li>• Bubly®</li></ul> <p>Other carbonated beverages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Zevia®</li></ul> <p>Other non-carbonated sports drinks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gatorade®</li><li>• Powerade®</li></ul>

Ineligible items include store brand varieties of soda that meet the defined standards.

# Retailer Checklist for Identifying Products That Meet the Definition of “Soda”

## Step 1: Confirm Carbonation

- Is the beverage made with carbonated water? If yes, then go to Step 2.
  - If non-carbonated, the product does not meet the definition of soda.

## Step 2: Check for Sweeteners

- Does the beverage contain 5g or more of added sugar or artificial sweeteners?

Verify ingredients for sweeteners such as:

- Corn sweetener, corn syrup
- Aspartame, saccharin, sorbitol, xylitol, erythritol, dextrose, fructose, glucose, sucralose
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Lactose, malt syrup, maltose
- Molasses, raw sugar, sucrose

## Step 3: Review Juice or Nutritional Composition

- Does the beverage contain more than 50 percent vegetable or fruit juice by volume?
  - If no, the beverage meets the definition of soda.

## Step 4: Exclusions

- Is the product plain or naturally flavored carbonated water?
  - If yes, it does not meet the definition of soda.
- Does the beverage contain a natural sweetener such as stevia, monk fruit, honey, etc.?
  - If yes, it does not meet the definition of soda.

## Final Determination

If the beverage is carbonated, contains added sugar **or** artificial sweeteners, does not contain more than 50 percent vegetable or fruit juice, **and** contains at least 5g of added sugar/sweetener, it qualifies as soda under this definition.

## Energy Drinks

"Energy drinks" means a beverage containing at least sixty-five (65) milligrams of caffeine per eight (8) fluid ounces that are advertised as being specifically designed to provide metabolic stimulation or an increase to the consumer's mental or physical energy. "Energy drinks" do not include coffee or tea or any substantially coffee or tea-based beverage.

The following list of examples is not exhaustive and will vary based on each retailer's inventory. Retailers should use the checklist below to help identify other ineligible products.

<p><b>✗ Ineligible Items</b></p> <p>Energy Drinks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Red Bull™</li><li>• Monster Energy™</li><li>• Rockstar Energy®</li><li>• Bang Energy®</li><li>• C4 Energy®</li><li>• Celsius™</li><li>• 5-Hour Energy®</li><li>• NOS Energy®</li><li>• Reign™</li><li>• Alani Nu®</li><li>• Venom Energy®</li><li>• Ghost Energy®</li><li>• AriZona Energy®</li></ul>	<p><b>✓ SNAP-Eligible Items</b></p> <p>Coffee and Tea, including ready to drink coffee or tea-based beverages like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bottled iced coffee</li><li>• Cold brew</li><li>• Tejava®</li><li>• Pure Leaf®</li><li>• Gold Peak®</li><li>• AriZona Tea®</li></ul> <p>Other non-carbonated sports drinks like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gatorade®</li><li>• Powerade®</li><li>• Body Armor®</li></ul>
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Ineligible items include store brand varieties of energy drinks that meet the defined standards.

## Retailer Checklist for Identifying Products That Meet the Definition of "Energy Drinks"

### Step 1: Check Caffeine Content

- Does the beverage contain at least 65 mg of caffeine per 8 fluid ounces?
  - If caffeine content is below 65 mg per 8 fluid ounces, the product does not meet the definition of an energy drink.

### Step 2: Evaluate Advertising and Labeling

- Is the beverage marketed as providing metabolic stimulation or increased mental/physical energy?
  - Check branding for terms like "boost," "energy," "performance," "amped," or "stimulant." If beverage marketing contains these terms, the product meets the definition of an energy drink.

### Step 3: Exclusions

- Is the product coffee or tea or substantially coffee- or tea-based and not classified as an energy drink?
  - If yes, it does not meet the definition of an energy drink.

### Final Determination

If the beverage contains at least 65 mg of caffeine per 8 fluid ounces, is marketed as an energy-boosting product, and is not coffee or tea-based, it qualifies as an energy drink under this definition.

## **Candy**

“Candy” means a product that involves the preparation of sugar or artificial sweeteners in combination with chocolate, fruits, nuts, caramels, gummies, and hard candies or other ingredients or flavorings in the form of bars, drops, or pieces.

The following list of examples is not exhaustive and will vary based on each retailer’s inventory. Retailers should use the checklist below to help identify other ineligible products.

<b>✗ Ineligible Items</b>	<b>✓ SNAP-Eligible Items</b>
<p>Candy Bars like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hershey’s®</li><li>• Snickers®</li><li>• Milky Way®</li><li>• Baby Ruth®</li><li>• Butterfinger®</li><li>• KitKat®</li></ul> <p>Gummies like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Haribo®</li><li>• Sour Patch Kids®</li><li>• Swedish Fish®</li><li>• Gushers™</li><li>• Airheads®</li><li>• Twizzlers®</li><li>• Laffy Taffy®</li></ul> <p>Hard Candies like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jolly Rancher®</li><li>• Werther’s®</li><li>• Lifesavers®</li><li>• Lollipops</li></ul> <p>Candy pieces like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• M&amp;M’s®</li><li>• Starburst®</li><li>• Skittles®</li></ul> <p>Other similar candy items like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chocolatecovered nuts or fruits</li><li>• Toffee</li><li>• Mints</li></ul> <p>Products that are combined with candy like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Trail mix that contains candy pieces as defined</li><li>• Candy Pop® Popcorn</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Honey-roasted nuts</li><li>• Dried fruit</li><li>• Granola bars</li><li>• Breakfast cereal bars</li><li>• Marshmallows</li><li>• Items sold on the baking aisle such as boxed cake mixes, chocolate chips used for baking, icing, and sprinkles.</li></ul>

Ineligible items include store brand varieties of candy that meet the defined standards.

# Retailer Checklist for Identifying Products That Meet the Definition of "Candy"

## Step 1: Identify Sugar or Artificial Sweeteners

- Does the product contain sugar or artificial sweeteners as a primary ingredient?
  - If yes, go to Step 2.

## Step 2: Check for Ingredient Combinations

- Is the sugar/sweetener or candy item combined with one or more of the following?
  - Chocolate
  - Fruits
  - Nuts
  - Caramels
  - Gummies
  - Hard candies
- If yes, the product is considered a candy.

## Step 3: Verify Form and Presentation

- Does the product come in bars, drops, or pieces?
  - If yes, then the product is considered a candy.

## Step 4: Exclusions

- Is the item sold on the baking aisle?
  - If yes, then the product **not** considered a candy.
- Is the item a cereal or granola bar?
  - If yes, then the product is **not** considered a candy.

## Final Determination

If the product is made with sugar or artificial sweeteners, combined with the above ingredients, and is presented as bars, drops, or pieces, it qualifies as candy under this definition.

## **Prepared Desserts**

“Prepared Desserts” means processed, shelf-stable, ready-to-eat, pre-packaged sweet food intended for immediate consumption without any further preparation. This would include foods mostly made from “chemically” modified substances, along with additives to enhance taste, texture, appearance, and durability, with minimal whole foods.

<p><b>✗ Ineligible Items</b></p> <p>Shelf-stable prepared desserts like:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Twinkies®</li><li>• Ho Hos®</li><li>• Swiss Rolls</li><li>• Zebra Cakes</li><li>• SnoBalls®</li><li>• Oatmeal Creme Pies</li><li>• Market Pantry™ Cookies</li><li>• Oreo®</li><li>• Benton’s® Cookies</li><li>• Great Value™ Cookies</li><li>• Entenmann’s® items like Little Bites®, cakes, brownies, pies, pastries, cookies, and donuts</li><li>• Tastykake® items like Krimpets®, Kandy Kake®, Juniors®, donuts, honey buns, pastries, and pies</li></ul>	<p><b>✓ SNAP-Eligible Items</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fresh bakery items</li><li>• Frozen desserts</li><li>• Ingredients to prepare dessert items (sugar, flour, butter, etc.)</li><li>• Baking mixes (cake mix, brownie mix, cookie dough)</li><li>• Granola bars</li><li>• Protein bars</li><li>• Cereal bars</li><li>• Breakfast biscuits</li><li>• Breakfast toaster strudels</li><li>• Pop-Tarts®</li></ul>
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Ineligible items include store brand varieties of prepared desserts that meet the defined standards.

# Retailer Checklist for Identifying Products That Meet the Definition of "Prepared Desserts"

## Step 1: Confirm Shelf-Stability and Packaging

- Is the product processed and shelf-stable, meaning it does not require refrigeration or freezing?
  
- Is the item ready-to-eat and pre-packaged for immediate consumption?
  - If yes to both, continue to Step 2.

## Step 2: Review Ingredient Composition

- Does the product primarily consist of chemically modified substances and contain artificial additives to enhance taste, texture, appearance, and durability, rather than whole food ingredients?
  - Artificial sweeteners (aspartame, saccharin, sucralose)
  - Flavoring agents (artificial flavoring)
  - Thickeners (xanthan gum, gelatin)
  - Shelf-life extenders (preservatives, glycerin, ascorbic acid)
  
- Does the product include minimal whole foods, meaning it lacks substantial amounts of unprocessed ingredients such as fresh fruits, dairy, or grains?
  - If yes, then go to Step 3.

## Step 3: Check Product Type

- Is the product classified as a sweet food such as cakes, cookies, brownies, and pastries?
  - If yes, then this meets the definition of prepared dessert.
- Does the packaging suggest it is designed for immediate consumption rather than home preparation or baking?
  - If yes, then this meets the definition of prepared dessert.

## Step 4: Exclusions

- Is the product a fresh bakery item?
  - If yes, this is not considered a shelf-stable prepared dessert.
- Is fresh fruit, dairy, or whole grains listed among the first few ingredients?
  - If yes, this is not considered a shelf-stable prepared dessert.

## Final Determination

If the product is processed, shelf-stable, ready-to-eat, pre-packaged, made primarily from chemically modified substances with additives, it qualifies as a prepared dessert under this definition.

# Frequently Asked Questions

**Question: When does this change in SNAP eligible items take place?**

Answer: Beginning April 20, 2026, SNAP benefits may not be used to purchase soda, energy drinks, candy, and prepared desserts.

**Question: Will these changes impact all retailers or only certain types of stores?**

Answer: All Florida SNAP retailers will be required to implement these changes.

**Question: Why is Florida making this change?**

Answer: Florida made this change to better align SNAP with its intended purpose: providing low-income households access to a more nutritious diet to help alleviate hunger and combat malnutrition. By excluding soda, energy drinks, candy, and ultra-processed shelf-stable prepared desserts, Florida is taking a proactive step to ensure SNAP benefits are used for more nourishing foods.

**Question: What items are no longer eligible?**

Answer: Beginning April 20, 2026, SNAP benefits may not be used to purchase soda, energy drinks, candy, and ultra-processed shelf stable prepared desserts. Additional information regarding the products that may be included in this restriction can be found on the [Florida Healthy SNAP webpage](#).

**Question: What if I am a retailer in other states, are those locations impacted by Florida's change?**

Answer: This policy change only impacts SNAP benefits used in Florida. Each state may restrict different items, therefore retailers should remain engaged with each state's SNAP Administration Agency for additional information.

**Question: How should retailers update their Point-of-Sale (POS) systems to reflect the change?**

Answer: Retailers should work with their POS vendors to ensure system changes are implemented by April 20, 2026.

**Question: What if my store is unable to implement these changes?**

Answer: All SNAP retailers in Florida are required to implement these changes. If there are questions or concerns, retailers should complete the [Healthy SNAP Inquiry Form](#) and Department staff will assist.

**Question: How do these changes impact online retailers?**

Answer: The Department understands that some retailers may have an online presence across the country. Online retailers operating in Florida are required to implement these policy changes for Florida SNAP purchases.

**Question: Will there be guidance for retailers?**

Answer: Yes, retailers may use this Operational Handbook as guidance along with other available resources and materials provided on the [Healthy SNAP webpage](#).

**Question: Who can retailers contact for clarification or questions?**

Answer: SNAP retailers may use the [Healthy SNAP Inquiry form](#) to contact the Department with their inquiries. The Department may opt to address retailer inquiries by updating the Healthy SNAP FAQ, located on the [Healthy SNAP webpage](#), or by providing additional materials in the resources section.

**Question: Will the Department inform SNAP recipients about these changes?**

Answer: The Department is communicating with SNAP recipients about these changes through a variety of channels, including via email and the [Healthy SNAP webpage](#).

**Question: Are retailers required to sign an attestation form?**

Answer: Yes. Retailers are required to sign an attestation form confirming they will apply the SNAP restricted items to their POS systems and be ready by April 20, 2026.