



Beginning **August 31, 2026**, South Carolina will restrict candy, energy drinks, soft drinks, and sweetened beverages from the definition of eligible foods that may be purchased with SNAP benefits

The description of these restricted food items is as follows:

Candy: a preparation of sugar, honey, or other natural or artificial sweeteners in combination with chocolate, fruits, nuts, or other ingredients in the form of bars, drops, or pieces.

Candy" shall not include the following:

- Protein bars, granola bars.
- Baking ingredients such as sprinkles, chocolate melting wafers, toffee bits, or chocolate chips.
- Items primarily identified and sold as bakery or bread products, such as baked goods, cakes, crackers, cookies, muffins, brownies, pastries, bread, or similar products.

Energy Drinks: beverages 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" shall not include coffee or tea or any substantially coffee- or tea-based beverage.

Soft Drinks: any nonalcoholic beverage made with carbonated water and flavored or sweetened, or both, with more than five (5) grams of sugar or other natural or artificial sweeteners.

Diet and zero sugar soft drinks will remain an allowable purchase with SNAP benefits.

Sweetened Beverages: any sweetened beverage, flavored or sweetened or both, with added sugar or other natural or artificial sweeteners, ready for consumption without further processing.

"Soft Drinks" and "Sweetened Beverages" shall not include:

- A beverage that contains milk, milk products, soy, rice, or other milk substitutes.
- Any beverage consisting of 50% or more natural fruit or vegetable juice with no added caloric sweetener.

- Any product commonly referred to as "infant" or "baby" formula.
- Sports or rehydration beverages.
- Carbonated water beverages.
- Any beverage for medical use meaning any beverage suitable for human consumption and manufactured for use as a source of necessary nutrition due to a medical condition or for use as an oral rehydration electrolyte solution for infants and children formulated to prevent or treat dehydration due to illness.

How to identify items classified as candy?

Items marketed as “candy” means a product that involves the preparation of sugar, honey, or other natural or artificial sweeteners in combination with chocolate, fruits, nuts, or other ingredients in the form of bars, drops, or pieces. While the information below is not a comprehensive list of criteria for identifying items classified as candy, it provides guidance to assist in making that determination.

“Candy” items typically are

- Individually wrapped, colorful, or sold in snack-sized bags.
- Located on the snack/candy aisle, by the checkout lane or in the seasonal/holiday section.
- The labels focus on flavor, fun, and eating directly
- **Ingredients include** added flavors, colors, and are meant to be eaten as-is
- **Tend** to be ready-to-eat bars, gummies, mints, hard candies

“Candy” labeling may include items such as:

- Verbiage that focuses on flavor and enjoyment such as: “Milk Chocolate Bar”, “Chewy Caramels”, “Sour Gummies.”
- Serving sizes that often display verbiage such as “1 bar”, “3 pieces”, or “1 package.”
- Marketing language such as “fun size”, “snack size”, “treat”, or “share pack”
- Pictures of the candy itself.
- Bright, colorful branding aimed at being eye catching and encouraging immediate consumption.

A copy of the approved South Carolina Food Restriction waiver can be found [here](#).