

# HealthShare NSW Packaging Accessibility Rating Fact Sheet: *Putting patients' needs first*

## **Importance of accessible food packaging for patients**

Food packaging can be a major barrier to patient nutrition, because if patients can't open the packaging, they can't eat the food inside. This in turn increases food waste and most importantly can result in poorer patient nutrition<sup>1</sup>.

Research conducted in NSW hospitals revealed that 1-in-2 patients have some form of malnutrition<sup>2</sup>, which can double hospital stays and triple complications. Hard-to-open packaging contributes to this issue. Over 80% of elderly patients experienced difficulties or were unable to open one or more food packaging items<sup>3</sup>. Nearly 50% of patients of all ages struggled to open food packaging an average of three items<sup>3</sup>. Most importantly, according to a 2014 study conducted in a Tasmanian hospital, only 1-in-3 patients who experienced difficulty opening packaging asked for assistance, making it critical that consumers receive packaging they can open.



*Patient struggling with hard-to-open packaging*

In response to these findings, HealthShare NSW has put the patient at the centre of the procurement process by mandating that single serve food and beverage products on this tender provide their Packaging Accessibility Ratings (Rating), which show how easily their products can be opened by patients, many of whom are frail, aged or unwell. This information is then considered when selecting between different products listed on the *Packaging Accessibility Ratings Database*.

<sup>1</sup>Peter Garling 'Acute Care Services NSW Public Hospitals', Garling Report 2008

<sup>2</sup>Nutrition Matters - Diagnostic Report - Northern Sydney & Central Coast Health District 2007

<sup>3</sup>According to multiple patient studies in NSW Hospitals 2011-2015, HealthShare NSW 2015

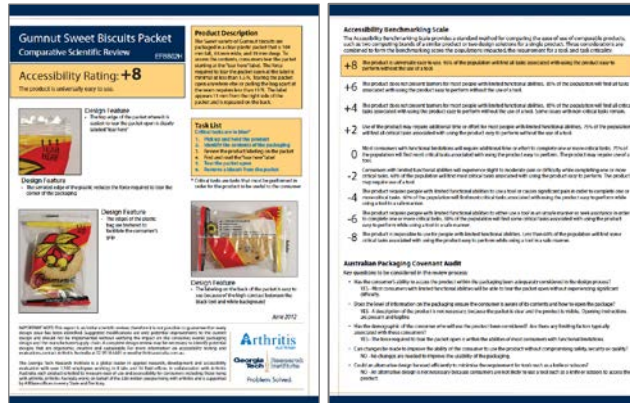
## **Does my product need to be tested?**

Products which are required to be tested are currently on the HealthShare NSW *Food Services 801 Contract* and have packaging which patients would open for themselves. This includes portion controlled products like biscuits, yogurt tubs, bottled water, etc. (excluding secondary packaging). These products need to be assessed and issued with a Packaging Accessibility Rating, which estimates the percentage of the population who can safely open the packaging and read the labelling, including allergen warnings.

## **Packaging Accessibility Rating**

Arthritis Australia's Accessible Design Division is HealthShare NSW's approved testing authority for issuing a Packaging Accessibility Rating (Rating). The Rating is issued as part of an Initial Scientific Review (ISR) design report, which is a brief two-page report that also identifies key design issues and suggests possible modifications to resolve such issues.

The Rating, which estimates the percentage of the population who can open and read packaging, is based on the Accessibility Benchmarking Scale. The highest result on the scale is a +8 Rating, which indicates that 95% of consumers are able to easily and safely open the packaging as well as read the labelling. The lowest result is a -8, which signifies that a product is hard to open for over 40% of the population and that consumers are exposed to an increase risk of injury due to the likely need to use a tool to open the product.



**Example ISR report**

Testing generally takes between 3-6 weeks and suppliers should contact Arthritis Australia’s Accessible Design Division to begin the process (contact details are listed below). Once the ISR is completed, the supplier will need to provide the products ordering codes to be added with the Rating to the *Packaging Accessibility Ratings Database*.

**Packaging Accessibility Rating Database**

The Packaging Accessibility Ratings in the database allows users, including HealthShare NSW, to make an informed decision on what products are easy or hard for patients to open and helps remove a major barrier to nutrition. The goal of the database is to enable patients to independently feed themselves by not requiring outside assistance to open their food packaging. Hard to open packaging also contributes to increased food waste, because consumers are unable to open the product.

The database is divided into different food categories so that users can compare packaging within each category. Not all packaging formats will receive a +8 Rating. Instead, the databases purpose is to identify what are the best packaging formats available within each food category.

The database lists the company name, brand name, product name, Packaging Accessibility Rating, report ID, product ordering codes (Manufacturing ID and GTIN) for each product entry. HealthShare NSW retains the right to request the supplier provide the products full ISR report if further information is required.

**What if I have a large product range requiring testing?**

To ensure the *Packaging Accessibility Rating Database* is accurate, all products listed need to be reviewed. To reduce the overall cost of testing a product range, Arthritis Australia’s Accessible Design Division has developed a Sufficiently Similar category of testing that can extend the ISR’s Rating to additional products, but only after testing is conducted to prove the accessibility result is consistent across the product range.

To see if your range would fall under this category, please provide 15 samples of each product to the Accessible Design Division for preliminary testing. The Division will then deem if the products fall under this category and provide a quote based on this.

If you have a significantly large range requiring testing (over 20 products in your range), please contact the Accessible Design Division to discuss your needs.

### ***How to receive a Packaging Accessibility Rating***

1. Send 15 samples of each product that you would like tested to Arthritis Australia's Accessible Design Division at Level 2, 255 Broadway, Glebe NSW 2037
  - Preliminary testing will be undertaken to see if all or some products in a range are Sufficiently Similar and a quote will be provided.
  - If products require refrigeration, please provide prior notification before delivery.
2. Formal testing will begin on approval of the quote and will take between 3-6 weeks. Clients will also be required to sign a standard testing agreement.
3. Once testing is completed, the results and an invoice will be sent to you, as well as a request to share your Packaging Accessibility Rating results on the *Packaging Accessibility Rating Database* used by HealthShare NSW along with the products' ordering codes (e.g. GTIN or Manufacturing ID).

### ***ISR and Sufficiently Similar testing costs***

**Initial Scientific Review (ISR) report** – issues a product with a **Packaging Accessibility Rating**: the two-page report also identifies design features, potential design issues and provides suggested modifications.

**Single product report: \$2,750 (excluding GST)**

**Additional product reports: \$2,500 per report (excluding GST)**

*Note: this is a completely new report with a new Packaging Accessibility Rating.*

**Sufficiently Similar products:** Products that are part of a product range and pass preliminary testing can have the Packaging Accessibility Rating of the main product featured in an ISR report extended to them. Preliminary testing conducted by the Accessible Design Division will check consistencies in the opening forces, size and labelling. Sufficiently Similar testing must occur at the same time as the ISR report on the main product and only the Accessible Design Division can deem if a product is Sufficiently Similar.

**Sufficiently Similar testing: \$300 per product (excluding GST)**

*Note: an additional third page will be added to the primary products ISR report identifying the Sufficiently Similar product/s and each will be issued with a unique code.*

*Please request a quote to see if your product fits this category.*

### ***Need more information?***

Find out more information about receiving a Packaging Accessibility Rating or learn about other testing services as well as Easy To Open certification visit [arthritisaustralia.com.au/accessible-design-division/resources-for-industry/accessibility-rating-health-system/](http://arthritisaustralia.com.au/accessible-design-division/resources-for-industry/accessibility-rating-health-system/) or contact:

#### **Accessible Design Division**

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### ***Free Food Packaging Accessibility Guidelines***

To better understand packaging accessibility, download a free copy of the *Food Packaging Design Accessibility Guidelines* at: <https://arthritisaustralia.com.au/accessible-design-division/resources-for-industry/guidelines-research/>



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## Frequently Asked Questions - Packaging Accessibility Rating

Understanding the ISR and the Packaging Accessibility Rating	
What is an Initial Scientific Review (ISR) report?	The ISR report evaluates your packaging in terms of ease of opening, safety and readability. It provides a Packaging Accessibility Rating using the Accessibility Benchmarking Scale. A <i>sample ISR report is available upon request.</i>
What is an Initial Scientific Review (ISR) – Excerpt Rating?	Suppliers can request from the Accessible Design Division an ISR – Excerpt Rating in addition to their ISR report free of charge. The ISR – Excerpt Rating contains the Packaging Accessibility Rating, product photo and Rating ID code, but no information about how that product achieved its result. Suppliers to Healthshare NSW have the option to submit either the ISR report or an ISR – Excerpt Rating. Healthshare NSW retains the right to request a full ISR report if an ISR – Excerpt Rating is provided. Contact the <i>Accessible Design Division</i> for more information.
What is the Packaging Accessibility Rating?	The Packaging Accessibility Rating uses the Accessibility Benchmarking Scale of -8 to +8, with a +8 being the highest Rating and -8 being the worst result. The Rating is a combination of the following three elements: <b>Population estimate:</b> The estimated percentage of the population that can open the packaging. <b>Task criticality:</b> The critical and non-critical tasks associated with opening/using a product & the degree of difficulty encountered. <b>Safety:</b> If opening the product requires the use of a tool (knife/scissors) then there is an increased risk of injury. Hard to read directions, warnings and expiry dates are also safety issues.
What is the Packaging Accessibility Rating Database?	HealthShare NSW and HPV increasingly share Packaging Accessibility Ratings with other state governments including Tasmania, as well as private and public healthcare providers. The <i>Packaging Accessibility Rating Database</i> is not shared with the general public or your competitors.  The Institute of Hospitality in Health Care (IHHC) also shares the <i>Packaging Accessibility Rating Database</i> with their members. The IHHC has over 300 members, all of which are food service managers involved in making purchasing decisions. IHHC members are responsible for feeding more than half of all patients in the health system.
How will HealthShare NSW use the Packaging Accessibility Rating in the selection process?	The Packaging Accessibility Ratings are placed onto the <i>Packaging Accessibility Rating Database</i> and are used on a comparative basis, which means that if your product rates higher than your competitors then you will have a competitive advantage. A higher Rating will improve the chances of your product being selected because more people can open it.
What Packaging Accessibility Rating do I have to achieve?	There is no minimum Rating, because Packaging Accessibility Ratings vary significantly according to packaging format. Achieving a better Rating than your competitors helps protect and build your market share. There is recognition that many products' Packaging

	Accessibility Ratings are less than +8, but the higher the Rating the better. Many state health authorities have replaced existing suppliers with those that have obtained a Rating of +4 to +8.
Can I win new business using the Packaging Accessibility Rating?	Yes. If your Packaging Accessibility Rating is better than some or all of your competitors, then the ISR can be a powerful sales tool to communicate this competitive advantage.
<b>Next steps after getting an ISR report</b>	
Do I have to make the suggested modifications in the ISR report?	The suggested modifications provided in the ISR report are not prescriptive. They are one way to improve your packaging but there may be other more effective ways.
If I make all the suggested modifications will I receive a Packaging Accessibility Rating of +8?  <i>Note: The ISR is only a brief report, so not all product issues may have been identified in this report.</i>	If you adopt all the suggested modifications, it is highly probable that your Packaging Accessibility Rating will improve, but the level of improvement will vary significantly depending on the number and type of issues to begin with. It is also important to consider that whenever you change the design of the product it has the potential to create other issues. Companies can work with the Accessible Design Division to further review changes before implementation to understand the benefits and risks of any product redevelopment.
What is the risk of failing to make improvements?	Complacency can be very costly. Unless your product already has a Rating of +8, then you have the potential to lose existing business if your competitors achieve a better Packaging Accessibility Rating than yours. Some suppliers have attained a +8 Rating by moving to a different packaging format.
What happens if I change the packaging after getting an ISR report?	If you are supplying the health system and change your packaging in any way, further testing will be required to verify the impact of these changes and/or recognise improvements. Suppliers must inform Arthritis Australia's Accessible Design Division about any changes.
Are there other benefits to retesting?	The ISR rewards innovation and allows companies to compete on more than price. If you have made improvements to your packaging, then your Rating may increase. The higher the Rating the better the chance customers will purchase your product. Once retesting occurs the Rating will be updated on the <i>Packaging Accessibility Rating Database</i> .
<b>Costs and timing</b>	
Is there a cost to getting a Packaging Accessibility Rating via an ISR report?	Yes there is a cost, but the fees vary significantly depending on the number of products being tested, if they are part of a product range and if they are being tested at the same time. Please request a quote or refer to further information available online <a href="https://arthritisaustralia.com.au/accessible-design-division/resources-for-industry/testing-and-consultation-services/initial-scientific-review-isr/">https://arthritisaustralia.com.au/accessible-design-division/resources-for-industry/testing-and-consultation-services/initial-scientific-review-isr/</a> .
How long does it take to get a Packaging Accessibility Rating through an ISR report on my product?	After the Accessible Design Division receives samples, a quote will be sent to the supplier, on approval of this quote testing will generally take 3-6 weeks. Supplier must also sign a standard testing agreement Testing times generally depend on the number of products already being tested during this period.

**For further information visit:** [arthritisaustralia.com.au/accessible-design-division/resources-for-industry/accessibility-rating-health-system/](https://arthritisaustralia.com.au/accessible-design-division/resources-for-industry/accessibility-rating-health-system/)



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