

It Pays to Read Food Labels

(NAPSA)—Research shows that shoppers who read food labels cut about twice the amount of fat from their diet as those who don't read labels. The reason: they're simply more aware of what they are eating.

Among the reasons cited for not reading the labels are that labels are confusing, and that the act of reading them takes too much time. Yet cutting saturated fat and cholesterol is an important way to fight heart disease, the number one killer of men and women in the United States.

The American Heart Association has developed a label-reading shortcut that identifies low-fat, low-cholesterol foods quickly and reliably. The Association's Food Certification Program and its highly visible red and white heart-check mark is on the labels of hundreds of food products. Products bearing the mark are low in saturated fat and cholesterol and can be part of a heart-healthy diet for healthy people over the age of 2.

All products bearing the heart-check mark meet the organization's nutrition criteria (per serving):

- Fat is less than or equal to 3 grams
- Saturated fat is less than or equal to 1 gram
- Cholesterol value is less than or equal to 20 milligrams
- Sodium value is less than or equal to 480 milligrams for individual foods
- 10 percent of one or more of these nutrients: protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron or dietary fiber.

Dietary changes based on selecting foods low in saturated



Look for the American Heart Association's red and white heart-check mark to quickly identify heart-healthy foods.

fat and cholesterol can lower blood cholesterol by 10 to 15 percent. That, in turn, can reduce the risk for heart disease by 20 to 30 percent. The American Heart Association recommends eating a nutritionally balanced diet consisting of a variety of foods, including lean meat, fish or poultry, whole grain cereals and breads, three servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy foods and seven to nine servings of fruit and vegetables a day.

To learn more about reducing the risk of heart disease and stroke, visit the American Heart Association's Web site at www.heart.org or call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (800-242-8721) for your free copy of the "Shop Smart" brochure.

The American Heart Association's Food Certification Program is for healthy people over age two. If you have a special medical condition, contact your physician or registered dietitian about your diet.

Note to Editors: Although March has been designated as nutrition month, the advice in this article can help your readers any time of the year.