

The Active Consumer

Nutrition Labels Get Makeover To Include Trans Fat

(NAPSA)—From reality television to the dietary guidelines, everywhere we turn these days someone or something is getting a makeover. In response to the prevalence of heart disease in Americans, the latest makeover is coming to a nutrition label near you. According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the single largest killer of American males and females. About every 26 seconds an American will suffer a coronary event and about every minute someone will die from one.

Many believe that these staggering statistics are partly due to the increased consumption of trans fat, which raises the LDL or “bad” cholesterol levels, increasing your risk for heart disease and other health conditions. Trans fat is found in processed foods like vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, cookies, snack foods, and other foods made with or fried in partially hydrogenated oils. Trans fat is formed when liquid oils are made into solid fats—essentially when hydrogen is added to vegetable oil—a process called hydrogenation. This process is used by many food companies and fast-food restaurants because it increases the shelf life and flavor stability of foods containing these fats. The current dietary recommendation is to minimize intake of trans fats.

Currently not found on many nutritional labels, the Food and Drug Administration has made it mandatory for all food manufac-



Amount Per Serving	
Calories 260	Calories from Fat 120
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 13g	20%
Saturated Fat 5g	25%
Trans Fat 2g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 660mg	28%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 15%	Iron 4%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.	
Calories:	2,000 2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g 80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g 25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg 300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg 2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g 375mg
Dietary Fiber	25g 30g
Calories per gram:	
Fat 9	Carbohydrate 4 Protein 4

turers to list trans fat on the Nutrition Facts panel of all food products by January 2006 to help consumers better understand their trans fat intake. These new rules are prompting some food companies to reformulate products or introduce trans-free versions to their product lines. Consumers will be able to find the new trans fat amounts listed on the Nutrition Facts panel directly under the line for saturated fat.

Products that contain less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving will show a level of zero on their labels. For example, most dairy

products contain such small amounts of trans fat that a zero value will be listed. In fact, one type of trans fat found in dairy—conjugated linoleic acid (CLA)—is specifically excluded from the labeling requirement because recent research suggests CLA may have some health benefits. In addition, dairy products contain numerous essential nutrients including calcium, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium and protein. This mix of nutrients found in dairy foods, especially calcium, may also be responsible for helping the body break down and burn fat and reduce your risk for high blood pressure, osteoporosis and certain cancers.

So what's the bottom line? Trans fats from hydrogenated sources—for example, margarines, vegetable shortening, highly processed snack foods such as crackers and cookies—should be limited. The new nutrition labels will help you quantify your intake of these, and to find appropriate alternatives. Healthy snacking alternatives include whole grain breads, nuts, fruits, raw vegetables and low-fat dairy foods such as yogurt, milk, and cheese. Such “naturally nutrient-rich” foods provide a variety of key nutrients. By reading nutrition labels carefully and making appropriate selections you can ensure that you and your family are getting the best diet possible—important not just to optimize your current health but to prevent chronic disease in the long run.