

## Make smart choices for heart-healthy eating

Since 1993, the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has required that food labels note the saturated fat and dietary cholesterol content on the Nutrition Facts panel. With trans fat added to the list, you'll now know how much of all three are in the foods you buy.

This revised label will be especially useful to people concerned about high blood cholesterol and heart disease, although everyone should be aware of the risk posed by consuming too much saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. Studies show that a diet high in these fats raises low-density lipoprotein (LDL), or "bad" cholesterol, levels, which increases your risk of coronary heart disease. More than 12.5 million Americans have this condition, according to the National Institutes of Health, and more than 500,000 die from it each year, making it one of the leading causes of death in the U.S.

Consult the Nutrition Facts panel to help you choose foods lower in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. Compare similar foods and opt for those with the lower combined saturated and trans fats and lower amount of cholesterol. Although the updated Nutrition Facts panel will list the amount of trans fat in a product, it will not show a Percent Daily Value (%DV). While studies have confirmed the relationship between trans fat and an increased risk of heart disease, none has provided a reference value for trans fat or any other information the FDA believes sufficient to establish a Daily Reference Value or a %DV. There

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is, however, a %DV shown for saturated fat and cholesterol. To choose foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol, keep in mind that five percent of the Daily Value or less is low and 20 percent or more is high.

You can also use the %DV to make dietary trade-offs with other foods throughout the day. You don't have to give up a favorite food to eat a healthy diet. When a favorite food is high in saturated fat or cholesterol, balance it with foods that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol at other times of the day.

Some other tips:

- Choose alternative fats. Replace saturated and trans fats in your diet with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which don't raise LDL levels and have health benefits when eaten in moderation.
- Consider fish. Most are lower in saturated fat than meat. Some, such as mackerel, sardines and salmon, contain omega-3 fatty acids that are being studied to determine if they offer protection against heart disease.
- Remember that all sources of fat contain 9 calories per gram, making it the most concentrated source of calories. By comparison, carbohydrates and protein have only 4 calories per gram.
- Remember to ask what fats will be used in the preparation of your meal when you eat out.

For more information on heart-healthy food choices, including a table showing total fat, saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol content per serving of a variety of common foods, visit the FCIC's website at [http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/food/reveal-fats/reveal-fats.htm](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/food/reveal-fats/reveal-fats.htm).