



The Beacon

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Med-Cert Medical Management Resources

“Guiding your way to better health management”

What Food Labels Really Mean

If you're confused about the claims now being made on food labels, you are not alone.

New Development: Beginning January 1, 2006, food makers were required by the FDA to list the amount of trans fat on the Nutrition Facts panel of most foods.

Makers of many margarines, crackers, chips, cookies, frozen breakfast foods, salad dressings and other processed foods that have traditionally been major sources of trans fat (oftentimes listed as "partially hydrogenated" oils) began claiming that their products contained "0 g" of the artery-clogging fats.

Does this mean that these products are now free of trans fat? Not necessarily.

What you may not know: The FDA labeling law allows food manufacturers to claim "0 g trans fat" on labels as long as the product contains less than 0.5 g of trans fat per serving. It was announced at the American Heart Association's Scientific Conference on Dietary Fats that trans fat should be "virtually eliminated" from everyone's diet.

What you can do: Add the amount of trans fat and saturated fat, and aim for an intake that is as low as possible.

Other food labels to watch out for...

"ORGANIC"

The US Department of Agriculture's current definition states that organic foods are those produced without the use of pesticides, sewage sludge (for fertilization) or synthetic fertilizer for growing plants... or hormones or antibiotics in animals.

The FDA has linked pesticides to some types of cancer, and numerous other studies have linked them to Parkinson's disease. There's also strong evidence from the American Medical Association that people are becoming resistant to some antibiotics because they ingest them via the meat products they consume.

Last October, the Agricultural Appropriations Conference Committee voted to allow synthetic ingredients into food labeled "organic." Therefore, yogurt, pudding and other products may be considered organic even if they contain synthetic additives.

What you can do: Whenever possible, buy organic meats and dairy products. For produce, choose organic varieties if you're buying one

of the items found by the Environmental Working Group (a nonprofit group of researchers who investigate environmental health threats) to be among the most contaminated with pesticides (see below). If you must buy nonorganic, choose produce that is least likely to be contaminated. Wash nonorganic produce vigorously under running water to remove as much potentially harmful residue as possible. (Organic produce also should be washed.) If you must buy nonorganic meat, choose the leanest cuts available and, whenever possible, remove the skin from poultry (toxins from hormones and antibiotics tend to accumulate in fatty tissue).

"NATURAL"

"Natural" is a word used for marketing purposes -- it's not a term that is defined by the government.

What you may not know: "Natural" does not mean that a food product is necessarily "healthful." For example, Breyers labels its ice cream "all natural," but it is high in fat and saturated fat.

What you can do: Read food labels carefully to determine the levels of fat and saturated fat as well as other ingredients found in "natural" products.

"LOW"

Many dairy products and some processed food products, such as soup, frozen entrées and snack foods, use the term "low" or some variation. *What these terms mean...*

Low fat: 3 g or less of total fat per serving.

Low saturated fat: 1 g or less of saturated fat per serving.

Low calorie: 40 calories or less per serving.

Low cholesterol: 20 mg or less of cholesterol and 2 g or less of saturated fat per serving.

Low sodium: 140 mg or less of sodium per serving.

Very low sodium: 35 mg or less of sodium per serving.

Nonfat: Less than 0.5 g of fat per serving.

"LEAN" AND "EXTRA LEAN"

"Lean" or "extra lean" refers to the fat content of meat, poultry and seafood. *What these terms mean...*

Lean: Less than 10 g of fat with no more than 4 g of saturated fat and less than 95 mg of cholesterol per 3.5-ounce serving.

Extra lean: Less than 5 g of fat with no more than 2 g of saturated fat and less than 95 mg of cholesterol per 3.5-ounce serving.

OTHER TERMS

"Reduced": The food contains at least 25% less of an ingredient (such as fat, cholesterol, sodium or added sugar) or calories than the regular product. For example, "Reduced Fat" Fig Newtons have at least 25% less fat than the original recipe.

"High": The food contains at least 20% of the Daily Value (recommended daily intake) for a particular nutrient. For example, the Daily Value for fiber is 25 g. If a food product contains 5 g of fiber per

serving, it might carry "high fiber" on its label.

Most Contaminated and Least Contaminated Produce

Most contaminated produce: Apples... bell peppers... celery... cherries... imported grapes... nectarines... peaches... pears... potatoes... red raspberries... spinach... strawberries. It is best to buy organic.

Least contaminated produce: Asparagus... avocados... bananas... broccoli... cauliflower... corn (frozen sweet)... kiwi... mangoes... onions... papaya... peas (frozen sweet)... pineapples. Buy nonorganic, if desired, but wash vigorously.



ASK A NURSE

Q: My weight loss has been very slow, only about 1 pound a week. Should I be losing faster?

A: **Losing a pound a week** is fine; slow, steady weight loss is sensible. Trying to speed up weight loss by cutting out more calories may send your body into "survival mode," when your body thinks it is being starved and slows down its metabolism to burn fewer calories.

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Q: My husband is insisting that cutting carbs out of my diet is the only way I will lose weight, is this true?

A: **The key to losing weight** is to eat fewer calories. Research shows that the type of calories you cut out does not matter.

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Q: I swear that I'm addicted to sugar? Is this possible?

A: **Not the way you can** be addicted to a drug. But sugar triggers the release of opiates in the brain, which makes you feel good. Unfortunately,

eating too much sugar is a recipe for weight gain. Start learning to rely on fruit. It offers naturally occurring sugar—but less than what's in most added-sugar treats—plus vitamins, mineral, and fill-you-up fiber.

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Recipe Corner

Baked Salmon with Dill Garlic Beurre Blanc

Beurre blanc literally means "white butter."

2 pounds Salmon, fresh, fillets
½ cup White wine
8 Tablespoons Butter, cold, cut into 16 pieces



1 teaspoon Dill weed
½ teaspoon Garlic, minced

Pre-heat the oven to 375°. Bake the salmon for 12-15 minutes. The fish should be firm but not dry. Place the wine, dill and garlic in a small saucepan. Reduce on high heat until almost dry. Remove from the heat and quickly add all the butter while whisking briskly. When all the butter has been incorporated, allow to rest 10 minutes. Spoon over the hot salmon.

Serves 4



This newsletter is brought to you courtesy of Med-Cert, Inc. Our sources for this edition are Web MD, and Prevention magazine.