

Health & Fitness

New food labels help cholesterol watchers

Whether you're watching your blood cholesterol for general health reasons or because your doctor has advised you to, the new Nutrition Facts panel due on most packaged foods by May 8 can help you.

"To control your blood cholesterol, you need to control the amount of saturated fat as well as the amount of cholesterol you consume," says Dr. J. Lynne Brown, associate professor of food science in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "The Nutrition Facts panel lists the amount of saturated fat and the amount of cholesterol in a serving.

"This listing allows you to compare the amounts of these nutrients in different foods. Suppose you are comparing two different kinds of cookies. A serving of one type lists 5 grams of saturated fat and a serving of another type lists 2 grams of saturated fat. To help control your blood cholesterol, you would be wise to choose the cookie with only 2 grams."

The Nutrition Facts label also lists another handy tool for blood cholesterol watchers. It's called the Percent Daily Value. "This shows the amount of a nutrient that a serving of that food contributed to the amount recommended

for a healthful diet," says Brown.

"Think of it as a point system. You are allowed 100 points, or 100 percent in a day, of cholesterol. The foods you eat in a day should provide not much more than a 100 Percent Daily Value of cholesterol.

Compare the daily values of different foods to find one suitable for you. "A serving of one type of cheesecake provides 50 percent of the daily value for cholesterol; a serving of the other provides 30 percent. If you choose the one with 30 percent, you still have 70 points, or 70 percent, of the amount of cholesterol recommended that can come from other foods that day.

"However, if you choose the one with 50 percent, then you have to be careful to choose other low-cholesterol foods on the day you eat the cheesecake since you have only 50 percent left."

The new food regulations provide two other tools that can help those concerned about blood cholesterol—health claims and nutrient content claims. "The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allows foods to carry health claims about nutrients and heart disease," says Brown. "Most of the time these claims will appear on the front of the package.

"A label might state, 'While many factors affect heart disease, diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease.' If the manufacturer cannot fit the claim on the front of the package, you may see a statement like this: 'See side panel for information about the relationship of saturated fat, cholesterol and heart disease.'"

A health-claim statement is useful for spotting foods that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol. "Any food carrying a health claim can have no more than 4 grams of saturated fat and 60 milligrams of cholesterol per serving," says Brown.

"In addition, the food can have no more than 13 grams of total fat and 480 milligrams of sodium per serving. Those carrying claims about saturated fat, cholesterol and heart disease must have even

smaller amounts of fat, saturated fat and cholesterol."

People watching their blood cholesterol can look for several other nutrient content claims. "Saturated fat free" means the food has less than 0.5 grams of saturated fat. "Low in saturated fat" means the food has no more than 1 gram of saturated fat.

"Cholesterol free" means less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and no more than 2 grams of saturated fat. "Low cholesterol" means less than 20 milligrams of cholesterol and no more than 2 grams of saturated fat.

"Study these claims and then take a close look at the Nutrition Facts panel," says Brown. "A food carrying these labels still can be high in total fat and calories, because there are other types of fat beside saturated fat. Always check the numbers."

Red Cross offers CPR challenge certification

On the first Friday of each month, beginning March 4, the Wyoming Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross will offer a "challenge" opportunity to anyone who is in need of CPR or First Aid re-certification and unable to attend a scheduled course.

With the exception of "Instructor" certification, all CPR and First Aid training levels may be challenged. Certificates will be issued on the date of successful completion of challenge requirements. Challenge requirements as proscribed by national policy, include a demonstration of competence in specific skills and a passing grade in the appropriate written test.

Those who wish to challenge must hold current American Red Cross certification or the American Heart Association equivalent. Advance registration is strongly encouraged but "walk-ins" will be accepted on a limited, space-available basis. For more information, contact the Health and Safety Office, 156 South Franklin Street, at 823-7161.

'All Kids Belong' at the ARC

The Arc, Luzerne County's association for retarded citizens will sponsor a workshop entitled "All Kids Belong: About Inclusion" Tuesday, March 22 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Luzerne-Wyoming Counties Mental Health/Mental Retardation Program office.

The workshop, presented by Janet Hermann, chairperson of The Arc-PA Education Commit-

tee, will cover such topics as segregation and its outcomes, federal and state laws, the difference between inclusion and mainstreaming, Pennsylvania's record on inclusion, what inclusion is and why it is important, and how to make inclusion happen.

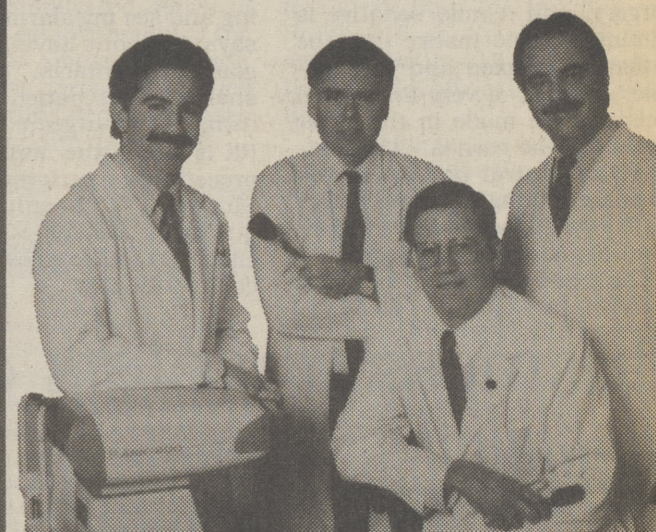
For more information, or to register for the workshop, please call The Arc office at 829-7953.

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