

How to Use the New Trans-Fats Number on Food Labels

Effective January 1, 2006, all food manufacturers are now required by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to list trans-fat content on all U.S. food nutrition labels.

HEALTH CONCERN FOR TRANS-FATS

Trans-fats are formed when food manufacturers hydrogenate vegetable oils to prolong the shelf life of products such as cookies, crackers, snack foods and other processed foods that include oils. The presence of trans-fats in foods acts like saturated fat. They increase the levels of LDL (low-density lipoprotein, or “bad”) cholesterol in your blood that increases your risk for heart disease.

WHAT DOES THE TRANS-FAT NUMBER TELL YOU?

The new labeling will show you the precise number of grams of trans-fats found in a single serving of food. But currently there is no recommended limit for daily trans-fat intake.

In the absence of a recommended daily limit for trans-fats on the label, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) recommends treating trans-fat as another form of saturated fat. Add the number of grams of trans-fat to the number of grams of saturated fat in a serving. Then compare this new number to the daily-recommended limit of saturated fats on the Nutrition Facts panel. People consuming a 2,000 calorie-per-day diet are advised to limit their total daily intake of saturated fat to below 20 grams.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT NUTRITION LABELS

The AICR Guide to the Nutrition Facts Label offers advice on how to make sense of all the numbers on the Nutrition Facts panel. For more information, visit the interactive AICR Guide to the Nutrition Facts Label page of the AICR website at www.aicr.org/label. A free single copy of the leaflet can be ordered by calling (800) 843-8114, ext. 451, between 9:00 am and 5:00 pm Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

Source: News release, American Institute for Cancer Research.