



Labels can guide healthful choices

Heart disease runs in my family. I know Nutrition Facts labels can help me make better food choices, but I'm not sure how. Can you help?

Absolutely. Here are the basics:

- Look for foods that have less saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.
- Choose foods with less sodium, especially if high blood pressure is a concern.
- Check the calories: Most of us should consume fewer. You can find out what is right for you by going to <http://www.mypyramid.gov> and clicking on "Get a personalized plan."
- Check the fiber: Most of us need more. The general recommendation is to eat 14 grams of fiber per 1,000 calories consumed; for adult women, that's about 23-28 grams a day; for men, it's about 28-42 grams.

Although they're not listed on Nutrition Facts labels, omega-3 fatty acids are also heart-healthy. Good sources include fatty types of fish, such as salmon, halibut, mackerel or tuna fillets; flaxseed and flaxseed oil; canola or soybean oil; pumpkin seeds; and walnuts. Sometimes eggs, dairy products and beef also contain omega-3s; it depends what the animals eat. It's not hard to spot eggs high in omega-3s — that's a strong selling point, and the cartons would be clearly marked. For

beef and dairy products, look for those that indicate the cattle were grass-fed.

Before you go searching out those foods, though, stop in the produce aisle. Diets high in fruits and vegetables provide many health benefits, including reducing your heart-disease risk. Canned and frozen fruits and vegetables are also good options. But, be sure to choose canned fruit packed in its own juice, not syrup. And, be aware of the sodium in canned vegetables, as well as the fat, calories and sodium in frozen vegetables that come with sauce.

Interestingly, it appears that more and more people are making the connection between a good diet and good health. A recently released 2008 Food and Drug Administration survey showed that:

- More consumers are making the link between trans fats and a greater risk of heart disease: Only 32 percent were aware in 2004 compared with 62 percent in 2008.
- There's also greater awareness of the possible benefits of omega-3 fatty acids, from 31 percent in 2004 to 52 percent in 2008.
- More people are using food labels: 54 percent say they read the label the first time they buy a product, a 10-percent increase over 2002.

For more, check the FDA's Web site on the topic at <http://www.fda.gov/Food/LabelingNutrition>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu.



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By Martha Filipic

614-292-9833

filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Julie Shertzer, registered dietitian and program specialist for Ohio State University Extension in the Department of Human Nutrition, in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

**Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations**
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
614-292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

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