

A Mandatory Labeling of Trans-Fats

(Mandatory labeling went into effect January 1, 2006)

Years in the works, mandatory trans-fats labeling gets the green light. Labeling could save lives and dollars.

Based on a comprehensive report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), *trans-fat* intake can increase heart disease risk and therefore, there's no safe level of trans-fat in the diet. After 3-years since the initial proposal for labeling, the IOM report prompted the FDA to make mandatory labeling of trans fats on food labels a priority. The FDA hopes to publish a final rule as soon as possible – either this fall or early next spring.

The IOM report concluded that trans-fats are directly associated with increasing LDL “bad” cholesterol, increasing heart disease risk, and there is substantial evidence that trans-fats are in fact more harmful with respect to heart disease than saturated fats.

Currently, trans-fat labeling on the Nutrition Facts panel is voluntary. The final regulation will make trans-fats mandatory under the fat content.

Trans-fats are found in oils, margarines and thousands of processed foods with *hydrogenated oils*. Trans-fats are naturally found in milk, butter, and meats. Therefore, they are unavoidable in ordinary diets, but can be greatly reduced by limiting intake of processed, packaged foods and baked goods.

Before mandatory labeling, consumers have been unable to identify foods containing trans-fats to limit their intake. This new labeling will allow consumers to make healthier food choices and may lead some food makers to reduce the use of trans-fats in their products.

The FDA has previously estimated that labeling trans-fats would avert 2,500 to 5,600 deaths per year and prevent thousands of new cases of heart disease – while saving *billions of dollars* in healthcare costs.

The report concluded that trans-fat intake should be kept “as low as possible while consuming a nutritionally adequate diet.”

Reference:

Food and Drug Administration. Internet site: www.cfsan.fda.gov/~lrd/hhtfacid.html. (July 2002).

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www.whitehouse.gov/omb/pubpress/hhs_prompt_letter.html. (July 2002).