

Healthy Eating

Reading Nutritional Food Panels? It's Now Easier

(NAPSA)—If you read the nutritional panels on foods when you shop, you have plenty of company. Nearly eight out of 10 Americans have joined you and nearly three-fourths of consumers say they are choosing reduced fat or no-fat foods, according to a survey by the American Heart Association.

Reading nutrition facts panels and choosing appropriate foods is crucial for people who need to follow a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol to maintain heart health. But many shoppers may not have the time to fully scrutinize labels at the grocery store.

The average shopper is already spending more than 50 minutes in the grocery store for their major shopping trip of the week. Many Americans would like to make their shopping more efficient. The American Heart Association's Food Certification Program with its familiar heart-check mark can help shoppers speed through the aisles by helping them identify heart-healthy foods in a flash.

The easy-to-recognize red heart with white check mark is a quick and reliable tool for finding foods that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol. The heart-check mark is one simple tool that consumers can use to make heart-healthy food choices.

Food products with the heart-check mark on the label must meet the following criteria per serving:

- Low fat (less than or equal to 3 grams).
- Low saturated fat (less than or equal to 1 gram).
- Low cholesterol (less than or equal to 20 milligrams).
- Sodium value of less than or equal to 480 milligrams for individual foods. Main dishes and meals have special levels.
- Finally, it must contain at least 10 percent of the Daily Value of one or more of these naturally occurring nutrients: protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron or dietary fiber.



CHECK IT OUT—Even shoppers in a hurry can make smart choices by looking for the red heart with white check mark.

• For meats to be eligible for the heart-check mark, they must meet the USDA standard for extra lean.

“Today’s food labels can be confusing to the people trying to eat a heart healthy diet,” says Rebecca Mullis, R.D. Ph.D., head of the University of Georgia’s Food and Nutrition Department and a volunteer member of the American Heart Association Nutrition Committee. “The American Heart Association’s heart-check mark is one way to quickly and reliably find foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol in the grocery store.”

In eight years the Food Certification program had gained the trust of consumers. “Even when people are in a hurry, they can make smart choices in the grocery store,” said Mullis. “I know folks don’t always take all the information they need with them when they shop, but the familiar red heart with the white check-mark reminds them that they are making a heart-healthy choice.”

For more information on the American Heart Association’s Food Certification Program, log on to [www.americanheart.org/Food Certification](http://www.americanheart.org/FoodCertification).