

Update On The Total Diet Study And Nutrition Labeling

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Total Diet Study

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Total Diet Study is a yearly program that monitors the levels of nutrients and contaminants in the U.S. food supply and in the daily diets of selected age-sex groups. The program is revised periodically to update the food list and diets so that it reflects current food consumption patterns. The nutrient data obtained from analyses of 234 foods collected four times per year from April 1982 to April 1991 are being summarized and evaluated. The foods were purchased in grocery stores and restaurants in specified cities and sent to the Total Diet Laboratory in Lenexa, Kansas, where they were prepared for consumption and analyzed. Results to be reported from this work include the levels of 11 nutritional elements in the 234 foods and estimates of the daily intakes of these elements for eight age-sex groups. Trends and changes in nutrient intakes over this nine-year time period will also be assessed.

A revised Total Diet Study program began in September 1991. The food list and diets for the revised program are based on information from the 1987-88 USDA Nationwide Food Consumption Survey. The revised program includes 265 foods and diets for 14 age-sex groups. The additional foods include more fast foods, mixed dishes, and infant foods. The age-sex groups evaluated in the program are infants, children ages 2, 6, and 10 years, teenage girls and boys 14-16 years of age, and women and men 25-30, 40-45, 60-65, and 70+ years. As with the previous program, the foods will be purchased four times per year and sent to the Total Diet Laboratory for analyses.

Nutrition Labeling

FDA's final regulations concerning the mandatory status of nutrition labeling, label content and format, serving sizes, nutrient content descriptors, and health claims were published in the *Federal Register* on January 6, 1993. Regulations pertaining to health claims became effective in May 1993. Most of the other regulations become effective in May 1994.

Criteria for nutrient content descriptors were defined for the following terms: free, low, reduced/less, modified, high, light/lite, good source, more/added, lean, and extra lean. There are now defined descriptive terms for the levels of calories, sodium, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, and sugars in foods.

Health claims for seven diet-disease relationships were developed and may be used by manufacturers if their products qualify for them. The seven health claims that have been authorized concern:

- saturated fat and cholesterol and coronary heart disease;
- fat and cancer;
- sodium and hypertension;
- calcium and osteoporosis;
- fiber-containing grain products, fruits, and vegetables and cancer;
- fruits, vegetables and grain products that contain fiber, particularly soluble fiber, and coronary heart disease; and
- fruits and vegetables and cancer.

The voluntary nutrition labeling program for raw fruit, vegetables, and fish has been in place since November 27, 1991. Retailers are encouraged to provide nutrition information in their stores for the 20 most frequently consumed raw fruit, vegetables, and fish. FDA identified these foods and provided the nutrition labeling values for them. Several trade associations developed posters and brochures that provide the nutrition labeling information. Retailers can obtain the information from the trade associations and make it available to the consumers in their stores. Alternatively, retailers can develop their own posters, brochures, or other materials to make the nutrition labeling information available to consumers.

The compliance of retailers with the voluntary nutrition labeling program was determined to be "substantial" based on a survey of 2,000 stores conducted by FDA in November and December 1992. Substantial compliance was defined as having at least 60% of the retail stores surveyed participating in the program. The program will remain voluntary for the next two years, and compliance will be reassessed in 1994. The nutrition labeling values for the 20 most frequently consumed fruit, vegetables, and fish have been revised to update them and to reflect the new labeling regulations for processed, packaged foods. A proposal concerning this revision was published in the *Federal Register* in May 1993. The final regulation will be published after the public comments are considered and the necessary changes are incorporated.

Other labeling issues which are forthcoming include a final rule on the definition of the descriptive term "healthy"; a proposal to revise the Daily Values for vitamins and minerals; and a proposal for the labeling of nutritional supplements.

FDA and the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture established the Food Labeling Education Information Center in September 1992 to encourage the exchange of information about projects and research in labeling education. The Center, which is located at the National Agriculture Library in Beltsville, Maryland, has a database with listings of print materials (books, fact sheets, etc.), audiovisuals, children's materials (games, comic books, etc.), media kits, program materials (exhibits, conferences, etc.), computer materials, and research results (reports, studies, and bibliographies).