

Smart Choices Program helps shoppers identify food and beverage choices

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This summer, the Smart Choices Program™ will appear on hundreds of products in supermarkets and other retail outlets across the country. This first-ever uniform front-of-pack nutrition labeling program, developed by a diverse coalition of scientists, nutritionists, consumer organizations and food industry leaders is designed to promote public health by helping shoppers make smarter food and beverage choices within product categories.

Unlike nutrient scoring systems, rankings or store-based programs, the Smart Choices Program uses a single, green check mark on the front of the product package to provide "at-a-glance" assurance that a product has met strict science-based nutrition criteria derived from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, reports from the Institute of Medicine and other sources of authoritative nutrition guidance. Qualifying products also will display a calorie indicator on-pack that identifies calories per serving and servings per container.

Participating companies with their own "better for you" nutrition labeling symbols have begun replacing them with the Smart Choices Program. Because of its scope and the science behind the new nutrition labeling system, this new program will bring clarity and consistency to the U.S. marketplace. Now shoppers will have a consistent program to identify smarter food and beverage choices, regardless of the stores they shop in or brands they buy.

"The coalition worked very hard to develop nutrition criteria that met the

highest of standards and a symbol consumers would appreciate and recognize when making choices at the point of purchase," said Eileen T. Kennedy, DSc, RD, Dean of the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University. "By providing a single, simple communication on the front of the package, the Smart Choices Program can help alleviate confusion in the supermarket and help today's busy shoppers make smarter choices for their families in store and at home."

Approximately 500 products from many of the nation's top brands, including ConAgra Foods, General Mills, Kellogg Company (US), Kraft Foods, PepsiCo, Sun-Maid, Tyson and Unilever (US), have already qualified for the Smart Choices Program designation in the program's 19 categories. By May 2010, more than 1,200 products will feature the symbol and calorie indicator.

"As a doctor of public health and registered dietitian, I know how challenging it can be for people to make good food and beverage choices and also keep calories in check, which is critical to both nutrition and healthy weight management," said Wendy Bazilian, DrPH, RD, nutrition expert and author of The SuperfoodRx™ Diet. "What is so great about the Smart Choices Program compared to other types of programs or systems is that it takes everything from fruits and vegetables to meals and desserts into consideration, which is critical to building healthy habits for the long-term."

Nutrition Criteria

To display the Smart Choices Program symbol, a food or beverage cannot exceed standards for specific "nutrients to limit" and, for most categories, must also provide positive attributes, such as "nutrients to encourage" or "food groups to encourage." Specific qualifying criteria were developed for 19 different product categories, such as [beverages](#), cereals, meats, dairy and snacks.

Nutrients to limit: total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, added sugars and sodium

Nutrients to encourage: calcium, potassium, fiber, magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E

Food groups to encourage: fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low fat or fat-free milk products

Source: American Society for Nutrition (news : web)

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