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April 1, 2005

Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to the April issue of **Eat Right Montana's** 2005 campaign, based on the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans: **A Healthier YOU: 3 steps for success**. This month, we discuss the importance of reading food labels - and reinforce the value of walking for physical activity. Both handouts have a goal-setting section - with spaces to check off suggested behavior changes or to write in an individual goal.

As a nutrition communicator, you know that Nutrition Facts labels can help people make healthier food choices. However, you may also have some ideas about how the food label could be improved. Now is the time to share those ideas with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as they consider ways to make food and beverage labels more consumer-friendly and easier to understand.

While the current label was developed with the aim of reducing heart disease risk, preventing obesity has become the primary health focus in the US today. That's why FDA is seeking public and professional comments on how food labeling regulations could be modified to give consumers better information to control and manage their weight. Here are some of the specific questions that FDA wants input on:

- **How can information on serving sizes be made more useful?**
- **Should calories be printed in larger type or moved to the front of the package?**
- **Do calories from fat still need to be included on the label?**

Submit comments thru May 2005 at:

fdadockets@oc.fda.gov

FDA, Division of Dockets Management,
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061, Rockville, MD 20852

Thank you for your past and future support of Eat Right Montana. Feedback is always important to us; please let us know what you think.

Rebekah Brown: 406-994-2926

Katie Bark: 406-994-5641

Debi Miller, Chair: 406-994-5641



A Healthier YOU #2: Reading Food Labels for optimal health
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT: Crystelle Fogle, MBA, RD
MT Department of Public Health and Human Services – 406/947-2344

Healthy Families 2005: Utilizing Nutrition Facts Labels (2nd in a series of 10)

Want to lose a few pounds? Lower your cholesterol levels? Improve your blood sugar test results? Energize your health with some powerful vitamins and minerals? Control your cravings for sugary snacks? The key to making these changes may be as close as the food packages in your kitchen.

“Research shows that people who read nutrition labels – required on all packaged food and beverage items – have healthier lifestyles,” says Lynn Hellenga, MS, RD (registered dietitian) with the Montana Nutrition and Physical Activity Program (NAPA). “Taking a few minutes to read the Nutrition Facts panel can help you make some big improvements in your weight and your health. Food and beverage labels really aren’t that complicated – you just have to know what you are looking for.”

According to Hellenga, becoming a food label investigator is much easier than most people think. She offers these three simple steps for successful label reading:

1. **Start with the serving size:** Since super-size portions have become so common, the actual serving size on a food label can be a reality check for many people. If what you usually eat is two or three times the serving size, you have to double – or triple – all the other label numbers.
2. **Check out the calorie content:** This is the bottom line for weight management. If you take in more calories than your body needs for daily living, it will store the extra. To maintain a healthy weight, most adults – with a moderate level of activity – need about 2,000 total calories per day.
3. **Make decisions using % Daily Value (DV):** For all nutrients on food labels, **5% or less Daily Value is low** and **20% or more Daily Value is high**. Look for low DV on calories, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugars. Look for high DV on fiber, protein, minerals, and vitamins.

Eat Right Montana, a statewide coalition promoting healthful eating and active lifestyles, urges Montanans to utilize the Nutrition Facts panel for optimal health and weight management. Just like reading books can improve your mind, reading food labels can improve your health.

“Even children can learn to read food labels,” notes Hellenga. “Label reading is a great way to help kids compare products, like the amount of sugar in different cereals, and make healthier choices.”

ATTACHED: Reading Food Labels and Walking for Fitness: Three steps for success

Reading Food Labels: 3 steps for success

1. Start with the serving size.

The top two lines on the Nutrition Facts panel are the place to start your nutrition investigation. Here you'll find the **Serving Size** (in common household measures and as weight in grams) as well as the **Servings Per Container**.

Now, measure the amount you usually eat and compare it to the serving size listed on the label. If your usual portion is twice the serving on the Nutrition Facts panel, you need to double the numbers for calories, fat, and all the nutrients listed on the label.

2. Check out the calorie content carefully.

Calories do count. Maintaining a healthy weight is about balancing the calories you consume from foods and beverages with the physical activity that you do. Calories are listed as total **Calories** and as **Calories from Fat** – for the portion size listed.

Since moderately active adults need about 2,000 calories per day, aim for about 500 calories per meal – with a couple of smart snacks at 250 calories each. When one serving of a single food item has over 400 calories per serving, it is high in calories.

3. Make decisions using % Daily Value (DV) for nutrients.

The **% Daily Value** column provides a quick check on the nutrition value of any food or beverage choice. Percent Daily Value (% DV) is based on 2,000-calories – about right for moderately active adults. Your needs may vary with your activity level.

For all nutrients on food labels, **5% or less Daily Value is low** and **20% or more Daily Value is high**. Look for low DV on calories, fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and sugars. Look for high DV on fiber, protein, minerals, and vitamins.

What will you do for a healthier YOU?

- I will read at least one new food label every time I shop for groceries.
- I will read the Nutrition Facts panel on packaged snacks and beverages.
- I will choose items with 20% DV for vitamins, minerals, and fiber.
- I will _____



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Walking for Fitness: 3 steps for success

1. Set a daily walking goal – and keep a record.

Walking can work wonders for whole body fitness – for your waistline, your heart, your brain, and even your stress levels. Just 30 to 60 minutes of walking per day can give you a whole new outlook – and a stronger, firmer body.

Setting goals and keeping records are two proven ways to change behaviors. You can set your walking goals by minutes or by number of steps. Gradually increasing your time or steps is usually more successful than setting unrealistically high goals.

2. Wear comfortable shoes – all the time.

Comfortable shoes can make all the difference in the world. No one wants to walk when his or her feet hurt! A pair of well-fitting walking shoes – and comfortable sports socks – are both essential for any serious walking program.

If you wear comfortable shoes all day, you'll be able to get in even more steps – like taking the stairs at work or walking around the mall once or twice before you shop. Keep your walking shoes handy – and use them as often as you can.

3. Walk with a companion – human, pet, or electronic.

Although some people prefer to walk alone, most of us like to have a companion. Walking (and talking) with a friend or family member makes the time go faster. Being accountable to someone else also makes it easier to stick to a walking plan.

If you own a dog, walking is good for both of you! If you don't own a dog, do a friend a favor and borrow one for an hour. With or without a pet, listening to the radio, music, or books-on-CD are electronic ways to make walking more enjoyable.

What will you do for a healthier YOU?

- I will walk 100-200 more steps – or 10-15 more minutes – every day.
- I will keep a comfortable pair of walking shoes at work and in the car.
- I will buy a pedometer or step-counter – and wear it 4 to 5 days a week.
- I will _____



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Healthy Families 2005

A Healthier YOU: Three steps for success!

Topics:

- **Simple Guidelines ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Reading Food Labels ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **The “New Pyramid” ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Fruits ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Vegetables ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Nuts, Seeds, and Beans ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Grains ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Dairy Foods ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Meats ... for a Healthier YOU**
- **Poultry and Seafood ... for a Healthier YOU**



EAT RIGHT MONTANA

A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles

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