

FDA expands health claim for more fruits, vegetables

19 December 2016

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released an interim final rule today removing the low fat and positive nutrient requirements which will apply to nearly all fresh fruits and vegetables, allowing them to make a heart health claim and be eligible for food certification programs like the American Heart Association's Heart-Check mark program.

The ruling was in response to a petition submitted by the Association in September 2012. This petition requested an update to an FDA regulation, which limited the health claim to foods that were low fat and contained at least 10 percent of one or more beneficial nutrients including vitamins A and C, iron, calcium, dietary fiber and protein. This requirement excluded foods that could help Americans meet the daily serving recommendation for fruits and vegetables such as avocados, beets, cucumbers, grapes, lettuce, mushrooms, plums, scallions and sweet corn. The ruling today called this an "unintended consequence," stating that "consumption of fruits and vegetables is encouraged by dietary recommendations, and low saturated fat and low cholesterol fruits and vegetables should not be excluded from bearing this health claim."

"The American Heart Association wants to help motivate people to eat more fruits and vegetables, especially since most Americans today get less than half the amounts recommended for a healthy diet," said Jo Ann S. Carson PhD, RDN, LD, FAHA, chair of the American Heart Association's nutrition committee and professor of clinical nutrition at UT Southwestern Medical Center. "By providing them an easy way to identify [heart](#)-healthy foods at the grocery store through our Heart-Check program, we can help make a positive and influential impact on improving the health of all Americans."

The Heart-Check mark, the iconic red heart with the white check mark that has been helping shoppers select healthier foods since 1995, had

not been available for all of these foods because of the regulation related to amounts of fat and beneficial nutrients. However, the interim final rule issued today by the FDA broadens the opportunity for more fruits and vegetables to be labeled as heart-healthy.

The American Heart Association recommends four servings of fruits and five servings of vegetables per day, based on a 2,000-calorie diet, as an important component of an overall heart-healthy eating pattern. The recently launched +color campaign, part of the broader Healthy For Good initiative, specifically aims to encourage people to eat more fruits and vegetables every day. Learn more at www.heart.org/pluscolor.

The American Heart Association is pleased that the FDA has addressed this issue. However, while the interim rule applies to nearly all fresh/raw fruits and vegetables, it does not affect frozen and canned produce. The petition encouraged the FDA to proceed with a ruling on fresh fruits and vegetables if frozen and canned required more consideration, but we still believe strongly that they should be included. Many underserved communities lack adequate access to fresh produce, making frozen and canned varieties an important, and often their only, source of nutrients. The FDA has invited comments on the interim final rule, which can be done here. The Association encourages supporters of healthy food equity to continue to advocate for inclusion of frozen and canned fruits and [vegetables](#) in the final rule.

More information: For more information on the Heart-Check Food Certification Program and a list of foods that are currently certified, visit: www.heartcheck.org

Provided by American Heart Association

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