New FDA “Healthy” Labeling Guidelines Coming – How Would You Define It?

We all know when a food is labeled organic it is supposed to meet specifically defined criteria. But did you know that when the term “healthy” is used on a label it is supposed to meet specific FDA criteria?

The regulatory definition established by the FDA in 1993 also covered the terms health, healthful, healthfully, healthfulness, healthier, healthiest, healthily, and healthiness. Healthiness? Really? Yes, we looked it up. It is a word.

Under the 1993 rules, the two criteria attached to any derivative of the word healthy were related to fat content and specific nutrients.

> *The nutrient conditions for bearing a “healthy” nutrient content claim include specific criteria for nutrients to limit in the diet, such as total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, as well as requirements for nutrients to encourage in the diet, including vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron, protein, and fiber.” ~ FDA*

Changes to the Definition of Healthy

New scientific information is causing the FDA to rethink the definition of this label. For example, the old definition embraced the belief that a low-fat was best. Current science encourages the intake of mono and polyunsaturated fats rather than limiting fats altogether.

It seems the nutrient concerns have changed over time as well. In 1993, nutrients of concern were vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, and fiber. According to the FDA, today's concerns include potassium, vitamin D, iron, and calcium.

On July 14, 2016, the FDA released its new strategic plan for 2016-2025. In it, they address four goals: food safety, nutrition, Animal health, and organizational excellence. (see further reading)

Nutrition Facts Labels are being updated with new Daily Value (DV) requirements and the FDA is working toward changing the "healthy" definition. In the meantime, they have advised companies that they may use the healthy label for foods that meet the following:

"(1) Are not low in total fat, but have a fat profile makeup of predominantly mono and polyunsaturated fats; or

(2) contain at least ten percent of the Daily Value (DV) per reference amount customarily consumed (RACC) of potassium or vitamin D."

These new guidelines are non-binding recommendations for the interim while the FDA goes through the process of redefining healthy.

Public Comments

The FDA is asking for the public to take part in this process. So the question is, how do you define healthy? Since we believe the only truly healthy foods are whole, fresh, organic foods in their natural form, calling any processed food healthy is a bit of a stretch. But without question, some are healthier than others.

In addition to what the food should contain, there certainly are things it should not contain. At a minimum, no food should be called healthy if it contains artificial flavors, colors or

preservatives; MSG, GMOs, high fructose corn syrup, or trans fats. Should we go further? Should we declare no food is healthy of it contains processed sugar? Gluten? Dairy?

What do you think? The FDA is asking for public input. If you would like your voice to be heard on this subject, comments are being collected through Jan 26, 2017. The contact information the FDA provides on their website is as follows:

Submit electronic comments on regulations.gov to docket folder FDA-2016-D-2335.

Submit written comments to:

Division of Dockets Management (HFA-305)
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, rm. 1061
Rockville, MD 20852.
All comments should be identified with the docket number FDA-2016-D-2335.

For additional information on commenting, including details on making submissions with confidential information, see:

- Federal Register Notice for the Request for Information
- Federal Register Notice for the Guidance for Industry

Recommended Reading:

- *NSAIDs Warning – These Drugs Are Not Safe (Motrin, Advil, Naproxen…)*
- *Doctors Against Vaccines – Hear From Those Who Have Done the Research*
- *Scientists Against GMOs – Hear From Those Who Have Done the Research*
- *Detox Cheap and Easy Without Fasting – Recipes Included*
- *Holistic Guide to Healing the Endocrine System and Balancing Our Hormones*

Sources:

- *FDA to Overhaul the Definition of Healthy* – Organic Authority
- *"Healthy" on Food Labeling – FDA*
- *Use of the Term "Healthy" in the Labeling of Human Food Products: Guidance for Industry – FDA*