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## Nutrition menu labeling and artificial trans fat

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*This is a regular update provided by Public Health - Seattle & King County about the implementation of new trans fat and menu labeling regulations. Visit: [www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating)*

### Key dates

- **May 1, 2008:** The first phase to eliminate artificial trans fat in King County went into effect, and it applies to fry oils and shortenings used for deep frying or in spreads.
- **August 1, 2008 through December 31, 2008:** Chain restaurants will conduct nutritional analysis and have required nutrition information posted in approved locations by Jan. 1, 2009.
- **February 1, 2009:** Food establishments must eliminate artificial trans fat from other products served except if served in the original package, such as potato chips.

### Nutrition labeling policy update

The final Chain Restaurant Stakeholder meeting to develop implementation policies and procedures for nutrition labeling took place on June 4, 2008. Representatives from chain food establishments affected by the rule, the Washington Restaurant Association and Public Health staff have worked together to develop the implementation policies and procedures.

The regulation allows for industry to submit “substantially equivalent” proposals for labeling menus or menu boards. A PH team will review each proposal and its accompanying evaluation design. Industry will find the form and guidelines to request a substantially equivalent design on the Healthy Eating Web site [<http://www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating/menu/helpcenter>.]

### Evaluation

The nutrition labeling regulation baseline evaluation has begun, and local respondents are being asked questions by the national Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS). The goal is to complete 1640 surveys by December 31, 2008.

In addition to the BRFSS, a grant has been submitted to the Robert Wood-Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to implement a point-of-purchase (PoP) restaurant exit survey that will evaluate awareness and use of the nutrition labels. This approach is similar to the one used by New York City to evaluate its nutrition labeling regulation. PoP surveys will be pilot-tested during the summer of 2008. The objective is to complete 3,700 baseline

surveys by December 31, 2008. Customers will be asked at quick service chain food restaurants if they saw the nutrition information and if it influenced what they ordered at the point of purchase. Seventy-five locations in King County will be identified for these PoP exit surveys.

### **Nutrition labeling public education**

A total of 29 key informant surveys were conducted early in 2008 with local partner and stakeholder organizations and parent groups to identify public education campaign messages, dissemination strategies, and partners for supporting and sustaining education and intervention activities. A small working group of Public Health nutritionists, health educators, a food inspector and health coalition leaders is using these results as guidance in developing campaign concepts and messages. Public Health is identifying a communications agency to solidify concepts and educational materials for a campaign to be launched later this year.

### **Healthy Eating Web site**

Public Health this month launched expanded and re-designed Healthy Eating Web pages: [www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating](http://www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating). These pages contain trans fat and nutrition labeling information sections. Each section includes general information for the public as well as an industry-focused "Help Center." The Healthy Eating Web pages are user-friendly and easy to navigate. Ready-to-print handouts in multiple languages are available, making it easy to learn about both trans fat and nutrition labeling.

### **Trans fat implementation**

The first phase of trans fat elimination went into effect on May 1, 2008. In the first phase of the regulation, the restaurant industry was required to eliminate use of fry oils that contain trans fat. There was a 98% compliance rate at food establishments Public Health inspected since the May 1 implementation date.

Also, leading up to May 1, Public Health worked with the Northwest Biodiesel Network to identify local biofuel companies who would collect trans-fat-containing oils from restaurants. Restaurants would have been found in violation for having on their premises oils containing more than 0.5 grams trans fat per serving, and Public Health wanted to offer restaurants an environmentally-responsible, socially-conscious method of disposing of their oils. NW Biodiesel Network identified Standard Biodiesel and General Biodiesel, both of which are King County-located companies that pay restaurants for each gallon of oil. These efforts were promoted by Standard Biodiesel through a promotional letter to 2,400 restaurants, the Washington Restaurant Association and the Public Health Web site.