February is American Heart Month, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has a tool to help you achieve a heart-healthy lifestyle. It's called the Nutrition Facts Label, and it can be found on all packaged foods and beverages.

Now in its twentieth year, the Nutrition Facts Label helps you track the various nutrients you are getting from the foods you eat. In fact, it serves as your overall guide for comparing foods and making choices that can affect your long-term health!

Using Percent Daily Value (%DV) to Reduce Your Risk of Heart Disease

High blood pressure affects approximately one in three U.S. adults, or 75 million people. An additional 78 million adults suffer from slightly elevated blood pressure, which can turn into high blood pressure. High blood pressure forces the heart to work harder, and can lead to heart disease – the leading cause of death among men and women in the U.S.

Eating too much sodium, total fat (especially saturated and *trans* fat), and cholesterol can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure and heart disease. You can use the Percent Daily Value (%DV) listed on the Nutrition Facts Label as a guide to determine if a serving of food is *high* or *low* in these nutrients. As a general rule, remember that 5%DV or less of a nutrient is low, and 20%DV or more is high!

To help reduce your overall risk of high blood pressure and heart disease, be sure not to go above 100% of the Daily Value for sodium, total fat, and cholesterol each day. The Daily Value for sodium is less than 2400 milligrams (mg) per day – or 1500 mg per day for people with high blood pressure, diabetes or kidney disease; African-Americans; and people ages 51 and older. The Daily Value for total fat is less than 65 grams (g) per day, and the Daily Value for cholesterol is less than 300 mg per day. Remember, Daily Value recommendations for total fat and cholesterol are based on a 2000-calorie daily diet; your calorie needs may be different.

By using %DV on the Nutrition Facts Label to compare foods and the nutrients they contain, you can make heart-healthy choices at every meal.

For more information visit:
http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/ucm315393.htm
http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm199058.htm

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