

Nutrition menu labeling and artificial trans fat

Update • November 2007

This is a monthly update provided by Public Health - Seattle & King County about the implementation of new trans fat and menu labeling regulations. For more information, go online: www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating

Background

On July 19, 2007 the King County Board of Health adopted nutrition menu labeling and artificial trans fat regulations.

- Nutrition menu labeling: Food establishments will have until August 1, 2008 to conduct the nutritional analysis and put the information on menus and menu boards.
- Artificial trans fat: The first phase to eliminate artificial trans fat in King County applies to fry oils and shortenings, used for deep frying or in spreads, and goes into effect on May 1, 2008. Food establishments must eliminate artificial trans fat from other products served, except if served in the original package such as potato chips, by February 1, 2009.

Food establishments, food industry and stakeholders

Ad hoc committees: Two ad hoc advisory committees – one for artificial trans fat and another for nutrition menu labeling – have been created, each with 15 representatives from the food industry and restaurant establishments. The committees met for the first time on October 11, and they are expected to meet up to six times. The committees have been created to provide input from food industry representatives to regulation guidelines. For a summary of the first meetings, visit: www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating.

Ethnic restaurants: To receive input beyond the advisory committees and from smaller establishments about the trans fat regulation, Public Health has identified 21 small ethnic restaurants throughout the county for key informant interviews. The interviews will be conducted during the month of November, and they will provide insight into how the trans fat regulation may impact smaller establishments and how these establishments can be supported.

Nutrition analysis guidelines

Draft guidelines: Nutritional Analysis Guidelines have been completed, and they are being reviewed by stakeholders. The guidelines will be finalized this month of November.

The Nutritional Analysis Guidelines give food establishments and industry three options:

- purchase nutritional analysis software and have trained staff conduct the nutritional analysis
- contract with companies to either conduct nutritional analysis using software or conduct laboratory analyses
- use other means to obtain nutritional analysis, such as using cookbook recipes which include nutrition information

As part of the guidelines, Public Health has provided a list of suggested software, consulting businesses and companies that do laboratory analysis. Of the three options, the software is the least expensive, but the additional cost of staff time needs to be considered. The cost for the software can range between \$500 and \$4,000.

Education and communication

Website: The Healthy Eating web site was launched in October, with information on artificial trans fat and nutrition menu labeling: www.metrokc.gov/health/healthyeating. Features of the website include questions and answers on menu labeling and transfat, fact sheets, and a menu labeling quiz. Restaurant establishments, members of the restaurant industry and the public can submit comments or questions via a form on the website.

Hotline: A new hotline phone number, **206-205-8777**, was launched in early November. The phone number currently has information on both nutrition menu labeling and artificial trans fat, as well as information specific to both food establishments and the public. People can leave comments and questions, which will be answered by Public Health staff. By the end of November the phone line will also have information in Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Restaurant and industry education: An educational mailing will be sent in November to all 10,500 food establishments permitted by Public Health. The mailing will include a fact sheet on the regulations and information on how to contact Public Health with questions and comments. Public Health food inspectors are also being trained on the trans fat and menu labeling regulations, so they can answer questions when working in the field.