

Need for Minimum Healthy Fat Intake in Dietary Guidelines Wednesday, August 11, 2004

WASHINGTON, DC – Not all fats are created equally when it comes to health. In fact, certain fats, namely essential unsaturated fats, are known to have cardio-protective effects and should be consumed as part of a healthy diet, noted the U.S. Canola Association (USCA) in a white paper submitted to the U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee yesterday.

“The two essential fatty acids – alpha-linolenic acid (ALA) and linoleic acid (LA), an omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acid, respectively – should be treated as essential nutrients on the Nutrition Facts panel and in the U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans,” stated Jur Strobos, M.D., J.D., lead author of the USCA white paper. “As recognized by worldwide health authorities, these fats are an essential part of the human diet.”

The USCA calls for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to set a minimum intake recommendation for unsaturated fats and for the mandatory disclosure of unsaturated fat content and percent Daily Value on the Nutrition Facts panel. Currently, all declarations about unsaturated fats are voluntary as FDA-permitted health claims.

“There is no required disclosure about essential fatty acids on food labels,” Strobos noted. “This omission is striking and should be corrected in the upcoming revision of federal nutrition guidance and regulations.”

The USCA is also calling for revision of FDA rules that do not allow foods like canola oil to inform consumers about their health benefits unless they are low in total fat. Canola oil is used as an ingredient, but composed of healthy fat. Yet, because FDA does not recognize its actual use, consumers cannot be told to use canola oil as a healthy alternative fat in their meal preparation.

“Consumers should be informed of the healthy fats, not just the unhealthy ones, in food products and in an appropriate context,” noted Dale Thorenson, USCA assistant director. “The mantra that the lowest possible intake of fat is best is simply not true when it comes to healthy unsaturated fats.”

As canola oil is a good source of ALA and LA, it can help boost public intake of these nutrients.

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