



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

Office of Corporate Communications
1300 E Avenue □ Fort Lee, VA 23801-1800

Tel: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8524 DSN: 687-8000, Ext. 4-8524

FAX: (804) 734-8248 DSN: 687-8248

www.commissaries.com

Release Number: 81-09
Date: August 20, 2009
Contact: Lt. Col. Karen E. Hawkins, DeCA dietitian
Tel.: (804) 734-8000, Ext. 4-8404
E-mail: karen.hawkins@deca.mil

Look for Smart Choices in your commissary

*By Lt. Col. Karen E. Hawkins,
DeCA dietitian*

FORT LEE, Va. – The Smart Choices check mark is appearing on hundreds of products in your commissary this summer. This first-ever, uniform, front-of-pack nutrition labeling program, developed by scientists, nutritionists, consumer organizations and food industry leaders was created to help shoppers make informed food and beverage choices when shopping.

Unlike nutrient scoring systems, rankings or store-based programs, Smart Choices uses a single, green check mark on the front of the product package to provide “at-a-glance” guidance that a product has met strict science-based nutrition criteria. These standards use the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, reports from the Institute of Medicine and other sources of authoritative nutrition guidance. Foods that qualify for the Smart Choices symbol also will display calorie information on the front of the package, including calories per serving and number of servings per container. The goal is to help people stay within their daily calorie needs and make it easier for calorie comparisons.

Participating companies with their own “better for you” nutrition labeling symbols have begun replacing them with the Smart Choices symbol. Because of its scope and the science behind the new nutrition labeling system, this new program will bring clarity and consistency to the U.S. marketplace. So make sure to look for the Smart Choices check mark on foods the next time you are shopping in the commissary, where you’ll not only find healthy choices, but savings of 30 percent or more on your purchase compared to “downtown.”

Nutrition criteria

To display the Smart Choices symbol, a food or beverage has to meet the standards for specific “nutrients to limit” and, depending on the food, also include “nutrients to encourage” or “food groups to encourage.” Special criteria were developed for 19 different product categories, such as beverages, cereals, meats, dairy and snacks:

- Nutrients to limit: total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, cholesterol, added sugars and sodium
- Nutrients to encourage: calcium, potassium, fiber, magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E
- Food groups to encourage: fruits and vegetables, whole grains, low-fat or fat-free milk products

The Smart Choices Program was created through the Keystone Center, a nonprofit organization that addresses public health problems. Now, NSF International, a nonprofit public health organization, and the American Society for Nutrition together currently administer the new nutritional front-of-package labeling program.

The nutrition guidelines are designed to be updated along with new public policy, dietary guidelines and emerging science. This includes adjusting the criteria to reflect the upcoming 2010 Dietary Guidelines.

For more information about making healthy choices, visit Ask the Dietitian on <http://www.commissaries.com> and post your questions on the DeCA Dietitian Forum. Be sure to look for other useful information in the Dietitian’s Voice archive. Sign up with the DeCA Dietitian on www.twitter.com and get messages sent to your cell phone today. For delicious recipes, check out Kay’s Kitchen. And to enjoy all your commissary has to offer, sign up for the *Commissary Connection*.

- DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit*

and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.