

same as the old U.S. RDAs for the time being. Under the provisions of the Dietary Supplement Act of 1992, FDA plans to propose after Dec. 31, 1993, new values for the RDIs.

Nutrient Content Descriptors

The new regulations also spell out what terms may be used to describe the level of a nutrient in a food and how they can be used. These are the core terms:

- **Free.** This term means that a product contains no amount of, or only trivial or "physiologically inconsequential" amounts of, one or more of these components: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, sugars, and calories. For example, "calorie-free" means fewer than 5 calories per serving and "sugar-free" and "fat-free" both mean less than 0.5 g per serving. Synonyms for "free" include "without," "no" and "zero."
- **Low.** This term could be used on foods that could be eaten frequently without exceeding dietary guidelines for one or more of these components: fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, and calories. Thus, descriptors would be defined as follows:
 - **low fat:** 3 g or less per serving
 - **low saturated fat:** 1 g or less per serving
 - **low sodium:** less than 140 mg per serving
 - **very low sodium:** less than 35 mg per serving
 - **low cholesterol:** less than 20 mg per serving
 - **low calorie:** 40 calories or less per serving.Synonyms for low include "little," "few," and "low source of."

- **Lean and extra lean.** These terms can be used to describe the fat content of meat, poultry, seafood, and game meats.
 - **lean:** less than 10 g fat, less than 4 g saturated fat, and less than 95 mg cholesterol per serving and per 100 g.
 - **extra lean:** less than 5 g fat, less than 2 g saturated fat, and less than 95 mg cholesterol per serving and per 100 g.
- **High.** This term can be used if the food contains 20 percent or more of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient in a serving.
- **Good source.** This term means that one serving of a food contains 10 to 19 percent of the Daily Value for a particular nutrient.
- **Reduced.** This term means that a nutritionally altered product contains 25 percent less of a nutrient or of calories than the regular, or reference, product. However, a reduced claim can't be made on a product if its reference food already meets the requirement for a "low" claim.
- **Less.** This term means that a food, whether altered or not, contains 25 percent less of a nutrient or of calories than the reference food. For example, pretzels that have 25 percent less fat than potato chips could carry a "less" claim. "Fewer" is an acceptable synonym.
- **Light.** This descriptor can mean two things:
 - First, that a nutritionally altered product contains one-third fewer calories or half the fat of the reference food. If the food derives 50 percent or more of its calories from fat, the reduction must be 50 percent of the fat.

Second, that the sodium content of a low-calorie, low-fat food has been reduced by 50 percent. In addition, "light in sodium" may be used on food in which the sodium content has been reduced by at least 50 percent.

The term "light" still can be used to describe such properties as texture and color, as long as the label explains the intent; for example, "light brown sugar" and "light and fluffy."

- **More.** This term means that a serving of food, whether altered or not, contains a nutrient that is at least 10 percent of the Daily Value more than the reference food. The 10 percent of Daily Value also would apply to "fortified," "enriched" and "added" claims, but in those cases, the food must be altered.

Other Definitions

The regulations also address other claims. Among them:

- **Percent fat free:** A product bearing this claim must be a low-fat or a fat-free product. In addition, the claim must accurately reflect the amount of fat present in 100 g of the food. Thus, if a food contains 2.5 g fat per 50 g, the claim must be "95 percent fat free."
- **Implied:** These types of claims are prohibited when they wrongfully imply that a food contains or does not contain a meaningful level of a nutrient. For example, a product claiming to be made with an ingredient known to be a source of fiber (such as "made with oat bran") is not allowed unless the product contains enough of that ingredient (for example, oat bran) to meet the definition for "good source" of fiber. As another example, a claim that a product contains "no tropical oils" is allowed—but only on foods that are "low" in saturated fat because consumers have come to equate tropical oils with high saturated fat.
- **Meals and main dishes:** Claims that a meal or main dish is "free" of a nutrient, such as sodium or cholesterol, must meet the same requirements as those for individual foods. Other claims can be used under special circumstances. For example, "low-calorie" means the meal or main dish contains 120 calories or less per 100 g. "Low-sodium" means the food has 140 mg or less per 100 g. "Low-cholesterol" means the food contains 20 mg cholesterol or less per 100 g and no more than 2 g saturated fat. "Light" means the meal or main dish is low-fat or low-calorie.
- **Standardized foods:** Any nutrient content claim, such as "reduced fat," "low calorie," and "light," may be used in conjunction with a standardized term if the new product has been specifically formulated to meet FDA's criteria for that claim, if the product is not nutritionally inferior to the traditional standardized food, and the new product complies with certain compositional requirements set by FDA. A new product bearing a claim also must have performance characteristics similar to the referenced traditional standardized food. If the product doesn't, and the differences materially limit the product's use, its label must state the differences (for example, not recommended for baking) to inform consumers.
- **Healthy:** FDA also is issuing a proposal to define the term "healthy." Under that proposal, "healthy" could be used to describe a food that is low in fat and saturated fat and con-