

## Calif. Mandates Nutritional Info on Menus

Editorial Staff

In a move that he hopes will set precedence for a national model, California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed a bill on Sept. 30, 2008, that requires chain restaurants with 20 or more locations to put calorie counts and other nutritional information on their menus. California is the first state to enact a law to battle the ever-increasing rates of obesity in the United States.

The new law will require more than 17,000 restaurants statewide to post information on calories, saturated fat, carbohydrates and sodium for each menu item by 2011. Restaurant chains that fail to comply could face fines by county health officials. Currently, some restaurant chains supply nutritional information, but it is done so on a voluntary basis.

In Section 1 of the bill, legislators emphasize the need for greater consumer awareness and education regarding their nutritional decisions:

- (a) Over the past two decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of meals prepared or eaten outside the home, with an estimated one-third of calories being consumed in, and almost one-half of total food dollars being spent on, food purchased from or eaten at restaurants and other food facilities.
- (b) Increased caloric intake is a key factor contributing to the alarming increase in obesity in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese, and the rates of obesity have tripled in children and teens since 1980.
- (c) Obesity increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some cancers, and other health problems.
- (d) Broader availability of nutrition information regarding foods served at restaurants and other food service establishments would allow customers to make more informed decisions about the food they purchase.
- (e) Three-quarters of American adults report using food labels on packaged foods, which are required by the federal Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990.
- (f) Availability of nutrition information regarding restaurant food assists consumers who are monitoring their diets or dealing with chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- (g) Consumers should be provided with point-of-purchase access to nutritional information when eating out in order to make informed decisions involving their health and diet.
- (h) It is the intent of the Legislature to provide consumers with better access to nutritional information about prepared foods sold at food facilities so that consumers can understand the nutritional value of available foods.

"When I was in the Austrian army, I drove a tank that weighed 50 tons," said the governor at a press

conference. "Now multiply that by 3,500. That's as many pounds as California has gained in the past decade. This legislation will help Californians make more informed, healthier choices by making calorie information easily accessible at thousands of restaurants throughout the state."

## References

1. Baik H, Russell R. Vitamin B<sub>12</sub> deficiency in the elderly. *Ann Rev Nutr* 1999;19:357-77.
2. Chan F, Leung W. Peptic-ulcer disease. *Lancet* 2002;360:933-41.
3. Uemara N, Okamoto S, Yamamoto S, et al. Helicobacter pylori infection and the development of gastric cancer. *N Engl J Med* 2001;345:784-9.
4. Saltzman J, Russell R. The aging gut: nutritional issues. *Gastroenterol Clin North Am* 1998;27:309-24.
5. Untersmayr E, Scholl I, Swoboda I, et al. Antacid medication inhibits digestion of dietary proteins and causes food allergy: A fish allergy model in Balb/c mice. *J Allergy Clin Immunol* 2003;112:616-23.
6. Uemara N, Okamoto S, Yamamoto S, et al. Helicobacter pylori infection and the development of gastric cancer. *N Engl J Med* 2001;345:784-9.
7. Brandtzaeg P. Development and basic mechanisms of human gut immunity. *Nutr Rev* 1998;56:S5-18.
8. Ebringer A, Khalafpour S, Wilson C. Rheumatoid arthritis and Proteus: a possible aetiological association. *Rheumatol Int* 1989;9:223-8.
9. Newkirk M, Goldbach-Mansky R, Senior B, et al. Elevated levels of IgM and IgA antibodies to Proteus mirabilis and IgM antibodies to Escherichia coli are associated with early rheumatoid factor (RF)-positive rheumatoid arthritis. *Rheumatology* Nov 2005;44:1433-41.
10. Sahly H, Podschun R, Sass R, et al. Serum antibodies to Klebsiella capsular polysaccharides in ankylosing spondylitis. *Arthritis Rheumatol* 1994;37:754-9.
11. Wilson C, Rashid T, Tiwana H, et al. Cytotoxicity responses to peptide antigens in rheumatoid arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis. *J Rheumatol* 2003;30:972-8.
12. Tannock G, Ed. *Probiotics: A Critical Review*. Wymondham, UK: Horizon Scientific Press, 1999.
13. Reid G, Burton J. Use of lactobacillus to prevent infection by pathogenic bacteria. *Microbes Infect* 2002;4:319-24.
14. Guarner F. Enteric flora in health and disease. *Digestion* 2006;73(Suppl 1):5-12.
15. Fasano A. Regulation of intercellular tight junctions by zonula occludens toxin in its eukaryotic analogue zonulin. *Ann N Y Acad Sci* 2000;915:214-22
16. O'Hara A, Shanahan F. The gut flora as a forgotten organ. *EMBO Rep* 2006;7:688-93.
17. Iweala O, Nagler C. Immune privilege in the gut: the establishment and maintenance of non-responsiveness to dietary antigens and commensal flora. *Immunol Rev* 2006;213:82-100.
18. Gershon M. Nerves, reflexes and the enteric nervous system: Pathogenesis of the irritable bowel syndrome. *J Clin Gastroenterol* 2005;39:S184-93.
19. Gorard D, Libby G, Farthing M. Effect of a tricyclic antidepressant on small intestinal motility in health and diarrhea-predominant irritable bowel syndrome. *Dig Dis Sci* 1995;40:86-95.

NOVEMBER 2008