

The Facts on Trans Fat

A balanced diet contains foods from all food groups, and this includes fat. In fact, fat provides much of the great taste and texture we crave in other foods, and without it, food and eating would just not be the same. However, the type and the amount of fat play a crucial role on overall health. While fat is essential in providing energy and essential fatty acids to the body, it is important to know that while some types of fats are linked to good health, others are not.



Cakes, cookies, pies, crackers, snack foods, and stick margarines all contain trans fat. While all of these foods are desirable, it is important to note that eating foods that contain trans fat is neither required nor beneficial for health. In fact, *trans fat and the foods that contain it increase ones risk for coronary heart disease by raising levels of total and LDL (Bad) cholesterol, and decreasing HDL (Good) cholesterol.*

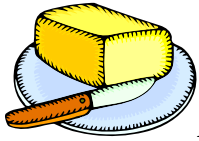
Research has indicated that atherosclerosis, acute coronary syndromes, and sudden death are caused by systemic inflammation and endothelial dysfunction. One study exploring the relation between trans fatty acids and the effects on systemic inflammation and endothelial function concluded that trans fatty acids are pro-inflammatory, as well as they may induce endothelial dysfunction. Furthermore, the “activation of inflammatory responses and endothelial dysfunction may represent important mediating pathways between trans fatty acid consumption and risk for coronary heart disease, sudden death, and diabetes.”⁽¹⁾



Sources of Trans Fat in Foods



Trans Fat Foods	Sources
Spreads	Margarine
Packaged Foods	Cake & Cookie Mixes
Soups	Ramen Noodles
Fast Food	Burgers, Fries, Ice Cream, Fried Chicken
Frozen Food	Pizza, Waffles, Pot Pies, Fish sticks
Baked Goods	Cakes, Cookies, Doughnuts, Cream Filled Cakes, Pound Cake



Another study, investigating home use of margarine as an important determinant of plasma trans fatty acid status, conducted a community based cross-sectional survey of people who consumed either margarine or butter but not both. To note, margarine contains hydrogenated oils with trans fat and butter contains saturated fat, of which trans fat is worse than saturated fat. The study concluded, "Home use of margarine, made with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, is an important determinant of trans fatty acid exposure." (3) For this reason, it is best to select olive oil and soft margarines instead of solid shortenings, stick margarines, and butter.



When cooking with fats, *olive oil* is the best choice! It lowers ones risk for heart disease by *reducing* the total LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels in the blood. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), substituting butter for about 2 Tbsp of extra virgin olive oil a day, may reduce ones risk for heart disease!

Currently the FDA requires that total fat, saturated fat, trans fat, and cholesterol be listed on the nutrition facts label so that shoppers can choose the product with the lowest combined value. But, does everyone understand how to use a nutrition facts label? One study investigated a patients understanding and use of snack food package nutrition labels. 90% of the patient sample correctly identified the number of calories per individual serving, but only 37% were able to recognize that the sample packages contained multiple servings. "Confusion between calories per serving and total calories was correlated with lower education levels and with the presence of cardiovascular heart disease in the patient sample." (2)

What's New?!

New York City ushered in a new era of healthy eating in July 2007 as a ban on trans fat-laden cooking oils in restaurants took effect. The first phase applies to oils, shortening, and margarines used for frying and spreading, and not to baked goods or prepared foods, or oils used to deep-fry dough or cake batter. These are covered by the second phase of the regulation, which takes effect on July 1, 2008. (4)

Dr. Walter Willett, the chair of the department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health says:

“If New Yorkers replace all sources of artificial trans fat, by even the most conservative estimates, at least 500 deaths from heart disease would be prevented each year in New York City – more than the number of people killed annually in motor vehicle crashes. Trans fat from partially hydrogenated vegetable oil is a toxic substance that does not belong in food.”

For more Information, Please Visit the following Websites:

[American Dietetic Association](#)

[Food and Drug Administration](#)

[American Heart Association](#)

[The National Cancer Institute](#)

[United State Department of Agriculture](#)

[International Food Information Council](#)

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Enter to Win!!!

Visit the Healthy Eating Program bulletin board located in the University Hospital Cafeteria, to enter for a chance to win an Oil Mister!



The oil mister is for spraying foods with a fine mist of oil. The nonaerosol mister has a built in filter that works well with olive oils flavored with herbs, cheese and garlic that would otherwise clog the sprayer. This simple tool provides precise control over the amount of oil you use, which makes it ideal for low-fat cooking!

References

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Pelletier, Allen et al. Patients' Understanding and Use of Snack Food Package Nutrition Labels. *The Journal of the American Board of Family Practice*. 2004; 17: 319-323.

Skeaff, Murray et al. Home use of margarine is an important determinant of Plasma Trans Fatty Acid Status: a biomarker study. *British Journal of Nutrition*. 2006; 96: 377-383.

<http://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory?id=3336306>