

## Talking About *Trans* Fat: What You Need to Know

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### *Trans* Fat At-a-Glance

#### UPDATE

On June 16, 2015, the FDA took action that will significantly reduce the use of Partially Hydrogenated Oils (PHOs), the major source of artificial *trans* fats in the food supply. This action is expected to reduce coronary heart disease and prevent thousands of fatal heart attacks each year in the United States.

The FDA has set a compliance date of three years. This will allow companies to either reformulate products without PHOs and/or petition the FDA to permit specific uses of PHOs. Many companies have already been working to remove PHOs from processed foods and the FDA anticipates that many may eliminate them ahead of the three-year compliance date.

It's important to note that *trans* fat will not be completely gone from foods because it occurs *naturally* in small amounts in meat and dairy products, and is present at very low levels in other edible oils. The FDA encourages consumers seeking to reduce *trans* fat intake to check a food's ingredient list to determine whether or not it contains PHOs. Currently, even foods labeled with "0" grams *trans* fat may contain small amounts (less than one-half a gram per serving) of PHOs. Selecting foods with even small amounts of *trans* fat can up to a significant intake over time.

#### There are two sources of *trans* fat, also known as *trans* fatty acids:

- ***Trans* fat formed naturally** – this type of *trans* fat is produced in the gut of some grazing animals. That's why small quantities of *trans* fat can be found in animal products like meat, milk, and milk products.
- ***Trans* fat formed during food processing** – this type of *trans* fat is created when hydrogen is added to vegetable oil (a process called **hydrogenation**) to make it more solid. **Partially hydrogenated oils** are used by food manufacturers to improve the texture, shelf life, and flavor stability of foods. About half of the *trans* fat Americans consume is formed during food processing, and partially hydrogenated oils are the main source of this type of *trans* fat in the United States (U.S.).

**Eating *trans* fat raises the level of low-density lipoprotein (LDL or "bad") cholesterol in the blood. An elevated LDL blood cholesterol level can increase your risk of developing cardiovascular disease.** Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in both men and women in the U.S. Therefore, you should keep your intake of *trans* fat as low as possible.

#### Fats in Your Diet

Limiting *trans* fats is one component of a healthful diet that also includes limiting saturated fat and dietary cholesterol.

Dietary fats are found in both plant and animal foods. Fat is a major source of energy for the body and aids in the absorption of vitamins A, D, E, and K. **Fat is also important** for proper growth, development, and maintenance of good health.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that adults consume no more than approximately one third of their calories from fat to reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases (such as cardiovascular disease), while providing for adequate intake of essential nutrients.

**Infants and toddlers** up to two years of age have the highest energy needs per unit of body weight of any age group. Fats are an important source of calories and nutrients for these youngsters.

**As a food ingredient**, fat provides flavor, consistency, and stability – and helps you feel full.

### Where's the *Trans* Fat?



*Trans* fat can be found in many of the same foods as saturated fat. These can include:

- Coffee creamer
- Crackers, cookies, cakes, frozen pies, and other baked goods
- Fast food
- Frozen pizza
- Ready-to-use frostings
- Refrigerated dough products (such as biscuits and cinnamon rolls)
- Snack foods (such as microwave popcorn)
- Vegetable shortenings and stick margarines

### Choose Your Fats Wisely

Use the **Nutrition Facts Label** as your tool for reducing *trans* fat in your diet – which may help decrease your risk of developing cardiovascular disease!

- Keep *trans* fat consumption as low as possible by limiting foods that contain *trans* fats formed during food processing. *Trans* fat has no percent Daily Value (%DV), so use the amount of grams (g) as your guide.
- Look for partially hydrogenated oils, a source of *trans* fat, on the ingredient list on a food package. Note: The Nutrition Facts label can state 0 grams of *trans* fat if the food product contains less than 0.5 grams of *trans* fat per serving. Thus, if a product contains partially hydrogenated oils, then it might contain small amounts of *trans* fat even if the label says 0 grams of *trans* fat.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and skinless poultry.
- Switch from stick margarine to soft margarine (liquid, tub, or spray).
- Limit packaged snack foods and commercially prepared (ready-made) baked goods.
- Substitute fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk and milk products (such as yogurt and cheese) or fortified soy beverages for full-fat (whole) milk and milk products.
- Get plenty of foods that are naturally low in fat and high in dietary fiber, such as whole grains, beans, peas, fruits, and vegetables.
- Cook and bake with liquid oils (like canola or olive oil) instead of solid fats (like shortening, butter, or lard).
- Try baking, steaming, grilling, or broiling. These cooking methods do not add extra fat.

**When eating out**, remember to ask which fats are being used to make the food you're ordering. You can also ask to see nutrition information, which is available in many fast food and chain restaurants, and choose a lower fat option.

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