

# THE TRUTH ABOUT TRANS FAT LABELING

## FACT SHEET

### What is trans fat?

Trans fat, also known as trans fatty acid, is a specific type of fat formed when liquid oils are made into solid fats (i.e. shortening). Small amounts of trans fat are also found naturally in some animal-based foods.

Trans fat is made in a chemical process called partial hydrogenation, designed to increase the shelf life and flavor stability of foods. During this process, hydrogen is added to vegetable oils, resulting in the reconfiguration of fat molecules to create trans fat. Trans fat is typically present in products with ingredient lists that include partially hydrogenated oils.

### Why is trans fat bad?

Trans fat raises low-density lipoprotein (LDL or “bad”) cholesterol and reduces high-density lipoprotein (HDL or “good”) cholesterol, increasing the risk for coronary heart disease and stroke. Trans fat has also been associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

### What types of foods contain trans fat?

Trans fat can be found in foods including shortenings, some margarines, crackers, candies, cookies, snack foods, fried foods, baked goods and other processed foods with partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.

### Does trans fat occur naturally in foods?

Yes. Trans fat is naturally occurring in meat and dairy products, including beef and butterfat. There is currently no evidence that naturally occurring trans fat poses the same risks as artificial, chemically modified trans fat. In fact, current evidence shows that naturally occurring trans fat has limited impact on health.

### Is eliminating trans fat entirely from your diet necessary?

No. Because small amounts of trans fat are naturally occurring in so many foods, including dairy products and meat, experts believe eliminating trans fat entirely could cause inadequate intake of some nutrients, which may result in health risks.

### How much trans fat should your diet include?

The FDA estimates that the average daily intake of trans fat in the U.S. is about 5.8g or 2.6% of calories per day for individuals 20 years of age and older. However, the American Heart Association recommends limiting daily intake to less than 2g trans fat per day, or approximately 1% of your daily caloric intake. Whenever possible, you should try to limit your intake of artificial, chemically modified trans fat.

## Is it possible for a food product to list zero grams trans fat in the Nutrition Facts panel while still containing some trans fat? -----

Yes. The FDA guidelines for trans fat labeling require trans fat to be listed on the Nutrition Facts panel. However, manufacturers of products containing less than 0.5g trans fat per serving are allowed to list trans fat as zero grams on the Nutrition Facts panel. As a result, products containing small amounts of trans fat per serving may be labeled as having zero grams trans fat. To identify products containing trans fat despite a Nutrition Facts panel claiming zero grams trans fat per serving, consumers can read ingredient lists and look for ingredients referred to as “partially hydrogenated” oils or “shortening.”

### Tips for reducing trans fat, saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet:

- Check the Nutrition Facts panel and choose foods lower in trans fat and cholesterol.
- If the Nutrition Facts panel claims zero grams trans fat, look for “partially hydrogenated oils” and/or “shortening” in the ingredient list to identify the presence of man-made trans fat below 0.5g trans fat per serving.
- Choose vegetable oils and soft margarines (liquid, tub or spray) because the combined amount of saturated and trans fats is lower than the amount in solid shortenings, hard margarines and animal fats, including butter.
- Replace saturated and trans fats in your diet with mono- and polyunsaturated fats. These fats do not raise LDL (or “bad”) cholesterol levels and have health benefits when eaten in moderation. Sources of monounsaturated fats include olive and canola oils. Sources of polyunsaturated fats include soybean, corn and sunflower oils, as well as foods like nuts.
- Consider fish. Most fish are lower in saturated fat than meat.
- Limit foods high in cholesterol such as liver, egg yolks and full-fat dairy products, like whole milk.
- Choose foods low in saturated fat, such as fat-free or 1% dairy products, lean meats, fish, skinless poultry, whole grain foods, and fruit and vegetables.
- When eating out, ask what kinds of oils are being used.

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#### SOURCES:

**American Dietetic Association** — <http://Eatright.org>

**American Heart Association** — [http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3045792#def\\_trans\\_fat](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3045792#def_trans_fat)

**The New England Journal of Medicine** — Mozaffarian, Dariush, M.D., M.P.H.; Martijn B. Katan, Ph.D.; Alberto Ascherio, M.D., Dr.P.H.; Meir J. Stampfer, M.D., Dr.P.H.; and Walter C. Willett, M.D., Dr.P.H. “Trans Fatty Acids and Cardiovascular Disease.” *The New England Journal of Medicine* 354.15 (13 Apr. 2006): 1601-1613.

**U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition** — <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qatrans2.html#s3q1>

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