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Healthy Trans Fats vs. Unhealthy Trans Fats Revealed

By Mike Geary

I'm going to talk about something today that most of you have probably never heard...that there is a distinction between good trans fats and bad trans fats. There is some evidence that the good trans can help you with fat loss, muscle building, and even cancer prevention, while the bad trans fats have been shown to cause heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and the general blubbering of your body.

I'm sure most of you have heard all of the ruckus in the news over the last few years about just how bad man-made trans fats are for your health. If you've been a reader of my newsletter and my "Truth about Six Pack Abs" e-book program, then you definitely know my opinion that these substances are some of the most evil food additives of all and are found in the vast majority of all processed foods and fast foods on the market today. In my opinion, man-made trans fats are right up there with smoking in terms of their degree of danger to your health. After all, they are one of THE MAIN factors for the explosion of heart disease since approximately the 1950's.

As you may have heard recently, the FDA has mandated that food manufacturers include the grams of trans fat on all nutrition labels starting back at the beginning of this year. This means that as inventory is replaced in the grocery stores, you should start to see grams of trans listed on all packages from now on, providing you with an easier way to avoid them.

With all of the talk about trans fats in the news these days, I wanted to clarify some things, particularly regarding bad trans fats vs. good trans fats. If you've never heard of good trans fats before, let me explain in a bit.

The Bad Trans Fats

First, the bad trans fats I'm referring to are the man-made kind. These are represented by any artificially hydrogenated oils. The main culprits are margarine, shortening, and partially hydrogenated oils that are in most processed foods, junk foods, and deep fried foods. These hydrogenated oils are highly processed using harsh chemical solvents like hexane (a component of gasoline), high heat, pressure, have a metal catalyst added, and are then deodorized and bleached. A small % of the solvent is allowed to remain in the finished oil. This has now become more of an industrial oil rather than a food oil, but somehow the FDA still allows the food manufacturers to put this crap in our food at

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huge quantities, even with the well documented health dangers.

These hydrogenated oils cause inflammation inside of your body, which signals the deposition of cholesterol as a healing agent on artery walls. Hence, hydrogenated oil = inflammation = clogged arteries. You can see why heart disease has exploded since this crap has been loaded into our food supply over the last 5 to 6 decades. As time goes on, and science continues to unveil how deadly these oils really are, I feel that eventually they will be illegal and banned from use. The labeling laws were just the first step. In fact, certain countries around the world have already banned the use of hydrogenated oils in food manufacturing or at least set dates to phase them out for good.

However, keep in mind that as companies are starting to phase out the use of hydrogenated oils in processed foods, they are replacing them, in most instances, with highly refined polyunsaturated oils.

These are still heavily processed oils using high heat, solvents, deodorizers, and bleaching agents. Even refined oils are known to produce inflammation in your body...a far cry from natural sources of healthy fats. Once again, for the best results, your best bet is avoiding highly processed foods altogether and choose whole, natural, minimally processed foods. Your body will thank you!

The Good Trans Fats

Ok, after having trash talked the man-made trans fats, let me clearly state that there IS such a thing as healthy natural trans fats. Natural trans fats are created in the stomachs of ruminant animals like cattle, sheep, goats, etc. and make their way into the fat stores of the animals. Therefore, the milk fat and the fat within the meat of these animals can provide natural healthy trans fats. Natural trans fats in your diet have been thought to have some potential benefit to aid in both muscle building and fat loss efforts. However, keep in mind that the quantity of healthy trans fats in the meat and dairy of ruminant animals is greatly reduced by mass-production methods of farming and their grain and soy heavy diets. Meat and dairy from grass-fed, free-range animals always have much higher quantities of these beneficial fats.

One such natural trans fat that you may have heard of is called conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) and has been marketed by many weight loss companies. Keep in mind that these man-made CLA pills you see in the stores may not be the best way to get CLA in your diet. They are artificially made from plant oils, instead of the natural process that happens in ruminant animals. Once again, man-made just doesn't compare to the benefits of natural sources.

Now that all of your labels should be listing grams of trans fat, keep in mind that if a quantity of trans fat is listed on a meat or dairy product, it is most likely the natural good trans fats that we've discussed here. Otherwise, if the quantity of trans is listed on any processed foods, it is most likely the dangerous unhealthy crap from artificially hydrogenated oils, so stay away!

I hope you've enjoyed this interesting look at good trans fat vs. bad trans fat and use the info to arm yourself with more healthful food choices for a better body.

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The Sneak Attack of Trans- Fats

By Meri Raffetto RD

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If you are like most people, you are probably confused about trans fats. What are they? Which foods have them? What is the health risk?

The truth is, trans fats are everywhere. They are lurking on the shelves in almost every aisle of our grocery stores. Just when you think that bag of microwave popcorn was a healthy choice for a snack... it might not be. Not because of the popcorn itself but because of what has been added to it.

So what are they? Trans fats are the result of a process called hydrogenation where they take relatively healthy oil and turn it into a solid form to help prolong the shelf life and freshness of the product. When these fats become solid, our bodies treat them more like saturated fats. Evidence shows that consumption of both saturated fat and trans fat can increase our LDL ("bad") cholesterol that increases the risk of coronary artery disease. There is also some evidence to support that trans fats may actually decrease our HDL ("good") cholesterol. Nearly 13 million Americans suffer from coronary artery disease and more than 500,000 die each year from causes related to coronary artery disease. Heart Disease is the number one cause of death for both men and women in the United States.

Unfortunately, trans fats have been a "hidden" fat for years. They are very popular in fast food chains because they are inexpensive to produce, easy to use, and they don't spatter. The reality is... it is in everything from crackers to breads to cereals and therefore, people who thought they were making good food choices may have been adding more fat to their diet than they anticipated.

Here are some samples of the surprise attack of trans fats:

1. Spreads. Margarine and shortening are loaded with trans fats.

Stick margarine has 2.8 grams of trans fat per tablespoon

Shortening has 4.2 grams of trans fat per tablespoon

Tip: look for soft tub margarines that say "no trans fats" on the container

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2.Soups. Ramen noodles and soup cups contain very high levels of trans fats

3.Cereals. Many cereals that would other wise be healthy choices contain the "hidden fats"

4.Crackers and popcorn

5.Many popular pancake and waffle mixes

The good news

Under new FDA regulations, by January 1, 2006, consumers will be able to find trans fat listed on nutrition labels under the line for saturated fat. You won't see a percent daily value because trans fats are not a natural food and we do not need them in our diet for any reason. The more you can limit your

trans fat intake, the better. Manufacturers will start phasing in the new labels before that deadline.

More good news is that public awareness of trans fats has already initiated some companies to change their ways. Frito Lay has said that they will remove trans fats from Doritos, Cheetos, and Tostitos. McDonalds has reported that they will remove ½ of the trans fats from their French fries. These foods will still fall into the "once in a while" category but removing trans fats will definitely help.

Until the new labels are available, the best way to know if your favorite foods have trans fats is to read the ingredients list. If you see the terms "Hydrogenated or Partially Hydrogenated oil" then it contains trans fats. You can also bet that any commercial baked goods including cakes, pies, and donuts will also be loaded with the "hidden fat".

Awareness is your best defense in limiting trans fats from your diet. Read your labels and make your choices wisely.

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Meri Raffetto is a Registered Dietitian and a recognized professional in the area of nutrition and wellness. She has developed online weight management programs to help people get off of diets and get into way of life. For more information or to sign up for our free newsletter, visit www.reallivingnutrition.com.



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