

Trans Fats: The Hidden Killer

Christine Foskett, BSc, DC
Bozeman Wellness Center

Of all the poisons in the food supply, trans fats are some of the most hidden and deadly. They are in many commonly consumed foods, from crackers and baked goods to breakfast cereals. And thanks to intentionally deceptive FDA-approved labeling laws, food products that contain sizable amounts of trans fats can still declare “trans fats free” right on their labels. Just how damaging are trans fats? Read this before you take another bite of a cookie, cracker or other baked-good and find out.

Trans fats are polyunsaturated vegetable oils (good oils) that have been hydrogenated/processed to make them remain solid at room temperature. The food industry loves trans fats because products made with them never seem to go bad (even the bugs don't want them, that should have been our first clue). Trans fats also come from frying food in polyunsaturated vegetable oils, such as

corn oil, olive oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, and soy oil, all of which are not bad for you until they are heated.

The ingestion of partially hydrogenated vegetable oils or trans fats have been linked to increases in cancer, heart disease, weak immune systems and many chronic degenerative disorders. Trans fats do all this damage because they become incorporated into our cells and the cells become leaky and distorted, causing vitamin and mineral deficiencies and overall poor health. Our body can't digest trans fats because of their molecular composition (very similar to plastics), they therefore stay in our bodies for approximately 90 days. As we can see, eating even small amounts of trans fats over a long period of time can really add up.


Trans fats are often hidden in foods. This clever trick involves reducing serving sizes until the trans fat level drops to 0.5 grams per serving, at which point the FDA says companies can just “round down” to zero. The catch? People can easily consume one or more grams by eating a large serving or two servings. Your only defense is to carefully read labels so you can avoid products containing trans fats. If the ingredients list contains partially hydrogenated vegetable oil (or corn,

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Better alternatives to trans fats are oils that are natural and come from nature. Coconut oil, which is a high-heat-stable oil, is very good for stir fry, sautéing vegetables and baking. Butter is also a good natural oil source that can be safely heated, not to mention is very healthy and flavorful.

These trans fats may be only a small part of your total dietary fat, but small changes in your diet can add up to significant health benefits, and this is one change that is well worth making. ■




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Dr. Christine Foskett
Dr. Philip Cameron

2419 West Main Street, Suite 1, Bozeman 5963556 • www.bozemanwellnesscenter.com