



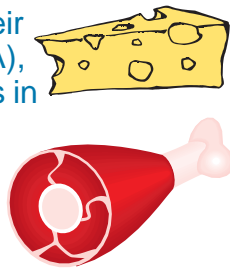
The Truth About...

Trans Fats

It is clear that we all need to include some fat in our diets to remain healthy, but not all fats are equal in terms of their effects on our health. Some are more beneficial and others may prove unhealthy if too much is eaten.

What are trans fats?

Trans fats, or to give them their full name, trans fatty acids (TFA), are fats present in small amounts in a wide range of foods. They occur naturally in small amounts in dairy products, for example cheese and cream, beef, lamb and mutton, and products made from these foods.



Trans fats are also produced when vegetable oils are hydrogenated- a chemical process that hardens vegetable oils and turns them into solid or semi-solid fats.

These hardened fats, usually referred to as hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oil or fat, are widely used as an ingredient, for example they can be used to make fat spreads, such as margarine, and are present in many baked goods. They may also be produced when vegetable oils are heated to fry foods at very high temperatures.

Which foods contain trans fats?

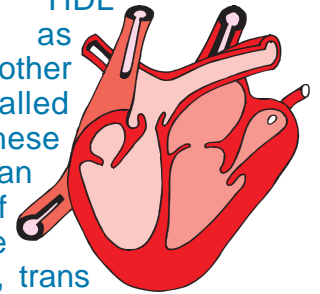
Foods from ruminant animals (cows and sheep) usually contain small amounts of naturally-occurring trans fats. Foods produced from or made using hardened vegetable oils as an ingredient, for example, bakery products such as biscuits, pies and cakes, and fried foods, typically contain some trans fats.



Fat spreads and margarines that have hydrogenated vegetable oil as an ingredient will usually contain some trans fats. But many manufacturers now avoid using hydrogenated fats or have reduced the amount of trans fats in their products to very low levels; these may be labelled 'low in trans' or 'virtually trans free'.

Should I worry about trans fats?

Trans fats, like most saturated fats, raise blood cholesterol levels, particularly levels of 'bad' LDL cholesterol. Trans fats can also reduce the 'good' HDL cholesterol, as well as increase levels of another form of blood fat called triglycerides. All of these effects of trans fats can raise your risk of coronary heart disease (CHD). Gram for gram, trans fats appear to increase risk of CHD more than saturated fats, and so are potentially worse for our health.



Do I need to avoid trans fats?

The good news is that in the UK we eat far fewer trans fats than saturated fats. However, as part of a healthy diet, you should aim to reduce the amount of saturated fats and trans fats that you eat.

There are currently no legal requirements for food manufacturers to label trans fats. This means you need to check ingredients lists for hydrogenated fats or hydrogenated vegetable oils. If a food product contains either, it will almost certainly contain trans fats too, and the

higher up the list the ingredient appears, the more trans fats the product is likely to contain.

In general though, trans fats are found in cakes, biscuits, h a r d margarines, takeaways, pastry, pies and fried foods, which are the sorts of foods to limit, when choosing a healthy, balanced diet.



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