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January 7, 2007

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Trans Fat Overview

Effective Jan. 1, 2006, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires food companies to list *trans* fat content separately on the Nutrition Facts panel of all packaged foods. Under this rule, consumers can see how much saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol are in the foods they choose. As food and beverage companies comply with the new labeling regulations, consumers will see nutrition labels listing any measurable (at least 0.5 gram per serving) amount of *trans* fat in a separate line in the total fat section under saturated fat. However, no "Percent Daily Value" (%DV) for *trans* fat is shown. This labeling requirement applies only to packaged food products, not foods served at restaurants. However, it is important to note that the FDA is extending the *trans* fat deadline for those companies who seek a petition. Therefore, consumers should be aware that just because they do not see *trans* fat on the label of the product, does not mean that the product is *trans* free

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 slice (47g)	
Servings Per Container 8	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 160 Calories from Fat 90	
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 10g	15%
Saturated Fat 2.5g	11%
Trans Fat 2g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 300mg	12%
Total Carbohydrate 15g	5%
Dietary Fiber less than 1g	3%
Sugars 1g	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin A 0%	

Trans fat (also called *trans* fatty acids) is formed when liquid vegetable oils go through a chemical process called hydrogenation, in which hydrogen is added to make the oils more solid. Hydrogenated vegetable fats are used by food processors because they allow longer shelf-life and give food desirable taste, shape and texture.

The majority of *trans* fat can be found in shortenings, stick (or hard) margarine, cookies, crackers, snack foods, fried foods (including fried fast food), doughnuts, pastries, baked goods, and other processed foods made with or fried in partially hydrogenated oils. Some *trans* fat is found naturally in small amounts in various meat and dairy products. The FDA estimates that the average daily intake of *trans* fat in the U.S. population is about 5.8 grams or 2.6 percent of calories per day for individuals 20 years of age and older.

Evidence suggests that consumption of *trans* fat raises LDL ("bad") [cholesterol](#) levels and lowers HDL ("good") cholesterol levels, causing the arteries to become clogged and increasing the risk of developing heart disease and stroke.

Summary of Other Fats

Besides *trans* fat, there are these other types of [fats](#): saturated fat, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats. Saturated fat is found in foods from animal sources and in a few plants. Foods high in saturated fat include fatty beef, veal, lamb, pork, lard, poultry fat, butter, cream, milk, cheese and other dairy products made from whole milk. These foods also contain dietary cholesterol. Foods from plants high in saturated fat include coconut oil, palm oil and palm kernel oil (often called tropical oils), and cocoa butter. On average, Americans consume approximately four to five times as much saturated fat as *trans* fat in their diet.

Polyunsaturated fats are found primarily in oils from plants, including

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safflower, sesame and sunflower seeds, corn and soybeans, many nuts and seeds and their oils, as well as fatty fish such as salmon. Sources of monounsaturated fats include canola, olive and peanut oils, and avocados.

Saturated fat, *trans* fat, and dietary cholesterol raise LDL (“bad”) cholesterol levels in the blood. Monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats do not raise LDL cholesterol and are beneficial when consumed in moderation.

AHA Recommendation

The American Heart Association urges consumers to read food nutrition labels before making purchases. Consumers should limit their intake of saturated fat to less than 7 percent of energy, limit trans fat intake to less than 1 percent of energy, and limit cholesterol intake to less than 300 mg per day while consuming a nutritionally adequate diet.

[Media Advisory: Trans Fats Now Listed on Food Labels](#)
[Trans Fat: Frequently Asked Questions](#)

Related AHA publications:

- [An Eating Plan for Healthy Americans](#)
- [Easy Food Tips for Heart-Healthy Eating \(also in Spanish\)](#)

AHA Scientific Statements:

[Trans Fatty Acids](#)
[Dietary Recommendations for Children and Adolescents](#)
[Diet and Lifestyle Recommendations Revision 2006](#)

See also:

[American Heart Association Consumer Publications](#)
[Cholesterol](#)
[Cholesterol, Dietary](#)
[Dietary Guidelines for Healthy American Adults](#)
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