Trans Fat: The Worst Fat

Trans fat is vegetable fat that has been chemically altered by a process called hydrogenation. This process turns healthy fat, such as corn oil or soybean oil, into a solid, unhealthy fat. The result is a type of fat that is worse for you than saturated fat, and is linked to increased LDL ("bad cholesterol"), decreased HDL ("good cholesterol"), and increased triglyceride levels, which all contribute to heart disease and insulin resistance.

How Much is too Much?
It depends on who you ask. A doctor will tell you none! That's why there is no daily value amount listed on food labels. Three grams of trans fat daily actually doubles your risk of heart disease.

How do you Avoid Them?
Read nutrition labels and look at the saturated fat and trans fat. Remember that the information is given per serving, so check the serving size as well. Choose reduced-fat and fat-free products, but only if other unhealthy ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup or partially hydrogenated oils have not been added. Always check ingredient listings for the term partially hydrogenated. Remember, the ingredient list is different than the nutrition label, and is often where fat information is hidden. Ingredient information is listed from greatest to smallest amounts, so if partially hydrogenated oils or high fructose corn syrup are listed as the first few ingredients, choose another product.

What Type of Foods Have Them?
Here’s the top 10 list of where you are most likely to find trans fat:
- Margarine – Look for no hydrogenated oil and the least amount of both trans and saturated fat. If you choose butter, use small amounts and those that are whipped or mixed with canola oil.
- Packaged foods – Mixes like cake and pancake mixes have added fat. Bake homemade instead.
- Soup – Dried and liquid soups both contain very high levels of trans fat.
- Fast food – Anything deep-fried will have trans fat. Order food grilled instead.
- Frozen foods – Check the label. Even frozen foods listed as “low fat” may contain trans fat.
- Baked goods – Donuts, cookies, and cake are loaded with trans fat. Bake your own instead.
- Candy and desserts – Tons of trans fat hides here too. Choose jelly beans or licorice over chocolate.
- Chips and crackers – Go for baked or whole grain. Have popcorn instead of pretzels.
- Breakfast foods – Cereals and breakfast bars are included. Choose whole grain instead.
- Toppings, dips and condiments – Salad dressing, gravy, mayonnaise, whipped toppings, and the like are loaded with fats. Use oil and vinegar or low-fat milk creamers instead.

Remember, often when fat is removed, sugar and salt are added, along with those pesky hydrogenated oils!

Did you know...?
The FDA requires that total fat, saturated fat and trans fat be included on nutrition labels, but there are other fats, such as mono and triglycerides that are not. In addition, polysaturated and monosaturated fat listings are optional. So, if you are eating something with trans fat, chances are you are unknowingly taking in more fat than you even realize!