

## **Trans Fat: Should You Be Concerned?**

Not sure if margarine is still a good alternative for butter? Read on...

### **What are trans fats?**

When liquid vegetable oils are processed they become a solid fat known as "trans" fat. These vegetable oils, when used in foods like cookies and crackers, make a better product that stays fresher longer. This process is called "hydrogenation." (The words "hydrogenated" and "partially hydrogenated" next to the type of vegetable oil on the ingredient label indicates the food has trans fat in it.) Trans fats are also found in fast foods, snack chips, cakes, fruit pies, pot pies and frozen waffles. They occur naturally in meat and dairy products.

### **Why should I be concerned about trans fats?**

Studies to date show that trans fat raises the level of LDL cholesterol (the "bad cholesterol) in the blood. And too much trans fat may reduce the level of HDL cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol) in the blood. These two cholesterol changes in your blood may increase your chances of getting heart disease.

### **Should I lower the amount of trans fat in my diet?**

It is most important to eat less total calories from fat. If you lower your total fat intake you will get less saturated fat and trans fat in your diet. This will improve your diet overall. Here are a few suggestions to help you lower total fat, saturated fat and trans fat:

- Use liquid vegetable oils like canola, olive, soybean and corn oils. These are lower in saturated fats.
- Choose tub, liquid margarine or vegetable oil spreads with liquid vegetable oils on the ingredient label for butter, lard, fatback, solid shortening and stick margarine, when possible. You will get less saturated fat.
- Buy light, low-fat or fat-free margarine. These have less fat or no total fat.
- Eat less cookies, cakes, pastries, crackers, potato chips and snack chips which contain fat and saturated fat. You will get less trans fat, too.

The bottom line...

Following the Food Guide Pyramid will help you choose a healthy diet: more grain foods, vegetables and fruit. Eating more of these foods will lower your total fat intake. This can reduce your risk of heart disease as well as diabetes, some cancers and help you manage your weight.

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- References: 1. "Margarine vs. Butter: The Trans Fat Debate," Colorado State Univ. Coop. Ext, 4/98, ([www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/PUBS/COLUMN/nn980422.html](http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/CoopExt/PUBS/COLUMN/nn980422.html))
2. "Questions and Answers about Trans Fats," International Food Information Council, 11/97 ([ificinfo.health.org/qanda/transqa.htm](http://ificinfo.health.org/qanda/transqa.htm))

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