

# Cut the Trans Fat. Get the Facts.

## What is trans fat?

Most trans fat is produced artificially, through a chemical process that adds hydrogen to vegetable oil, resulting in a “partially hydrogenated” oil.

## Which foods contain trans fat?

While trace amounts of trans fat are found naturally in meat and dairy products, the vast majority of trans fat in our diet is artificial. Common sources of artificial trans fat include: foods fried in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils; margarine and vegetable shortening; prepared foods such as pre-fried French fries, taco shells, and doughnuts; baked goods such as hamburger buns, pizza dough, crackers, cookies, and pies; and pre-mixed products such as pancake and hot chocolate mix. Products made with artificial trans fat have “partially hydrogenated” oil listed in the ingredients. *All* of these products can be made without artificial trans fat.

## Why is trans fat so bad?

Trans fat is the most dangerous fat. It increases LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, and lowers HDL (“good”) cholesterol. Trans fat has no known health benefits.

## Aren't many of the alternatives – such as butter, lard, and palm oil – just as bad for you as the trans fat in partially hydrogenated vegetable oil?

Evidence indicates that trans fat is even worse than saturated fat. Trans fat is commonly replaced with heart-healthy mono- and poly-unsaturated oils, including corn, soybean, safflower, sunflower, and canola, that can be used alone or in combination with palm oil and other saturated fats.

## What did the Board of Health approve regarding trans fat?

On March 3, 2008, the Board of Health approved an amendment to the County Sanitary Code that phases out the use of artificial trans fat in all food establishments that the Albany County Department of Health inspects and licenses.

The phase out will take place in two stages. First, on January 1, 2009, the food establishments must make sure that all oils, shortening and margarine containing artificial trans fat used for frying or for spreads have no more than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. Oils and shortening used to deep fry yeast dough and cake batter are not included in the first deadline.

Second, by July 1, 2009, **no food** containing “partially hydrogenated” vegetable oils, shortening or margarine with 0.5 grams or more of trans fat per serving may be used, served or stored by food service establishments. Foods served in the manufacturer’s original sealed packaging, such as a bag of chips or a package of crackers, are exempt.

## Why is the Albany County Department of Health concerned about trans fat?

The amendment to the Sanitary Code was passed in response to Resolution No. 237, dated May 14, 2007, of the Albany County Legislature, that requested the Albany County Board of Health and the Health Commissioner to require all food service establishments to phase out artificial trans fat.

One way the Department of Health protects and promotes the health of its citizens is by assuring the safety of food served in restaurants and other food service establishments within its jurisdiction. Trans fat in food is dangerous to health, unnecessary, and won’t be missed. Eliminating trans fat and replacing it with healthy alternatives may reduce the occurrence of heart disease and heart attacks. While many nutrition issues affect health, the Department of Health is acting now on trans fat because this significant threat to heart health can be eliminated through simple measures.

### **Why doesn't the County Health Department simply encourage restaurants to voluntarily stop using trans fat?**

In New York City (NYC), where a trans fat ban has already been implemented, the NYC Department of Health conducted a year-long education campaign to help restaurants voluntarily reduce trans fat. Information was provided to every restaurant in NYC and resources were provided to restaurants and food suppliers to help them make this change. While some restaurants reduced or stopped using trans fat, the overall use of trans fat did not decline. In restaurants where it could be determined if trans fat was used, half used it in oils or spreads both before *and* after the voluntary initiative. Despite this one-year voluntary campaign, New Yorkers were still exposed to high levels of dangerous, invisible, and avoidable trans fat in restaurant foods without their knowledge or consent.

### **Are healthier oils readily available for restaurants to make the switch?**

Companies that supply restaurants with cooking oils offer a wide range of replacements appropriate for a variety of specific cooking and baking needs. For frying, restaurants can choose traditional, healthy trans fat-free vegetable oils (such as soy, corn, or canola oils), as well as many new trans fat-free oils made from specific varieties of soybeans, sunflowers, and other grains and seeds. Some of the newer oils have long "fry lives" comparable to those of partially hydrogenated oils. Many reformulated trans fat-free margarines and shortenings are now available, and food manufacturers nationwide have reformulated their products.

### **Are healthier oils more expensive? Will restaurant prices go up?**

The cost of healthier replacement products should not affect the price of menu items. Widely available, traditional vegetable oils, such as corn and soy, are already used extensively by many food service establishments. Newly marketed trans fat-free oils with longer fry lives may cost more per gallon, but may also last longer, potentially making them cost-neutral. Trans fat-free oils are already being used by many establishments for cooking, frying, and baking.

### **How will these regulations affect our dining experience?**

Using trans fat-free oils will not change the taste or limit the variety of foods available in restaurants. In fact, Albany County residents are already enjoying trans fat-free dining in many restaurants.

***Food will taste the same — but your heart will know the difference!***