



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. Based on conservative estimates, trans fat is responsible for at least 500 deaths from heart disease in New York City each year. Trans fat has no known health benefits. Unlike saturated fat, there is no safe level of artificial trans fat consumption.

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 is the Health Department proposing about trans fat in restaurants?

The Board of Health is inviting public comment on a Health Department proposal to partially phase-out artificial trans fat in food preparation in all food service establishments. Six months after the Health Code amendment goes into effect, if it is adopted by the New York City Board of Health, food service establishments will need to ensure that their cooking oils, shortening, and margarines contain less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. Within 18 months, all other food products used will need to have less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving. Packaged food items still in the manufacturer’s original packaging when served to consumers would be exempt from this restriction.

Why is the Health Department concerned about trans fat?

One way the Health Department protects and promotes the health of New Yorkers is by assuring the safety of food served in restaurants through licensing and inspections. Like lead in paint, trans fat in food is dangerous to health, unnecessary, and won’t be missed. Just as when New York City prohibited lead paint in 1960, the Health Department remains committed to protecting New Yorkers from avoidable health hazards. Eliminating trans fat and replacing it with healthy alternatives would reduce coronary heart disease events such as heart attacks. While many nutrition issues affect health, the Health Department is acting now on trans fat because this significant threat to heart health can be eliminated through simple measures.



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

The Health Department conducted a year-long education campaign to help restaurants voluntarily reduce trans fat. Information was provided to every restaurant in New York City 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 are 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 New York City restaurants. 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 New York City restaurants for cooking, frying, and baking.

How much time and money will it cost to enforce this proposal?

Very little. The Health Department already inspects restaurants. Food safety inspectors will check whether food products contain less than 0.5 grams of trans fat at the same time that they conduct regular food safety inspections.

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, New Yorkers are already enjoying trans fat-free dining in many restaurants.

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Call 311 and ask for [Trans Fat](#), or visit nyc.gov/health