

Why are trans fats deadly?

There is a lot of poor health information in America today, and many of the health messages that we hear are paid for by large companies who want us to buy their products no matter what the costs are to our health. This is why it is important that when our government comes out with an official view about what is good for us and what is bad for us we need to listen.

Starting last year the United States government began requiring food makers to include the amount of trans fats in the things that they make on food labels. This has been the first major change to the food label in 13 years! Someone must have thought this was pretty important.

The food and drug administration has figured out that Americans are eating about four to six times more artificial trans fats than nature and two to six times more we should be eating total. This increases our risk of heart disease (and probably stroke) by quite a bit. The best way to learn about trans fats is to ask some questions:

So what is a trans fat?

Trans fats are oils that are used in the food industry. They were developed as a way to take totally liquid oil (like soybean oil) and make it into something more solid that could be spread (like margarine.) The chemical process of making liquid oil into partly solid fat makes a chemical change that puts the new oil in the group called trans fats.

Are all trans fats artificial?

No. There are natural trans fats also – but we eat much less of them.

Why do food makers use trans fats if they're unhealthy?

Because they last a long time and fry things well. They make desserts soft and fried food crisp – and they're cheap which is always good for business.

Is this just another health-scare?

No. The United States government knows that one of the number one causes of death and medical problems in America today is heart disease. Trans fats have been proven to change peoples' cholesterol and increase inflammation in their blood vessels – increasing their risk of heart disease.

How do I reduce trans fats in my diet?

The best way is to start reading food labels. If you start looking for the trans fats on the label you will quickly learn what foods you eat the most of that are the worst for you. You will also be able to figure out healthy choices and ways to replace the foods you like with healthier foods that may even taste better!

I eat a lot of fast food – how can I know how much trans fat there is in what I order away from home?

Look online. All the big fast food chains have nutritional information online. The important thing to remember that any trans fat is bad. Don't be fooled by seeing that something only has a few grams of trans fat – your goal is to eat none at all.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

http://www.fda.gov/fdac/features/2003/503_fats.html

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html>