

Trans Fats on the Nutrition Facts Label



U.S. Department of Agriculture

What is *trans* fat?

Trans fat, also called *trans* fatty acids (TFA), is formed when hydrogen is added to a vegetable oil to make a more solid fat like shortening or margarine. This process is called hydrogenation, and it is used to increase the shelf life and maintain the flavor and texture of foods.

Keep *trans* fats as low as possible in the diet. *Trans* fats behave like saturated fats by raising the “bad” cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein (LDL), that may increase your risk of coronary heart disease (CHD), a leading cause of death in the United States.

Trans fat on the Nutrition Facts label

As of January 1, 2006, all packaged foods including dietary supplements under the jurisdiction of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) must list the amount of *trans* fat on the Nutrition Facts label. The *trans* fat amount is to be listed below the saturated fat line and expressed to the nearest 0.5 g increment when below 5 g and to the nearest g increment when above 5 g.

However, if the **total** fat is less than 0.5 g per serving and no claims are made about fat, fatty acids, or cholesterol content, there are two options for declaring *trans* fat. The manufacturer may either list the *trans* fat amount as zero (0 g) on its respective line or add a footnote stating “Not a significant source of *trans* fat.”

Even though scientific reports have confirmed the relationship between *trans* fat and an increased risk of CHD, none have recommended an amount of *trans* fat that FDA could use to establish a Daily Value (DV). As a result, *trans* fat will only be listed with a gram amount.

FDA is allowing food manufacturers to request to use up old labels that do not list *trans* fat. See FDA’s guidance to industry document for more information (<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transgu3.html>). If *trans* fat is not yet listed on the Nutrition Facts label, you may wish to contact the manufacturer listed on the label for more information.

Sources of *trans* fats

Trans fats may be found in foods like:

- Cookies, crackers, cakes, muffins, pie crusts, pizza dough, and some breads like hamburger buns.
- Hard margarine (stick margarine) and vegetable shortening.
- Pre-mixed products (cake mix, pancake mix, and chocolate drink mix).
- Fried foods (doughnuts, French fries, fried chicken including chicken nuggets, and hard taco shells).
- Snack foods (potato, corn, and tortilla chips; candy; packaged or microwave popcorn).

Sample Label for Macaroni and Cheese

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 1.5g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Sugars 5g	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	4%
Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	20%
Iron	4%

* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Tips to lower saturated fat, *trans* fat, and cholesterol in your diet

- Keep total fat intake between 20 to 35 percent of calories, with most fats coming from sources of polyunsaturated (soybean, corn, safflower oils, and foods like nuts) and monounsaturated fatty acids (olive, sunflower, and canola oils) and make less than 10 percent of calories from saturated fats. Consume less than 300 mg/day of cholesterol and keep *trans* fats consumption as low as possible.
- Check the Nutrition Facts label to compare similar foods because the serving sizes are generally consistent, and choose the food with the lower amount of combined saturated and *trans* fats and the lower amount of cholesterol. It is important to check the Nutrition Facts label and the ingredient list frequently because ingredients can change at any time and could affect the nutrient content of the food.
- If the *trans* fat content is not yet on the Nutrition Facts label, check the ingredients list. Avoid foods that list "shortening" or "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil" as an ingredient. While ingredients cannot tell the whole story about *trans* fats, some may be indicators of possible *trans* fat content.
- Choose lean meats like poultry (without skin, not fried); lean beef and pork (trim visible fat, not fried); and, low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products.
- Choose fish more often at lunch or dinner. Fish such as salmon, trout, and herring are rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids have been reported to benefit the heart of healthy people and those at high risk or who have cardiovascular disease.
- When choosing foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol, use the Quick Guide to %DV: 5%DV or less is low and 20%DV or more is high. (Remember, there is no %DV recommendation for *trans* fat.)

Additional information

For more information on diet and related topics, try these links to other Federal government websites:

What is *trans* fat? <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html#whatis>

Questions and Answers on the *Trans* Fat Final Rule <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/qatrans2.html>

Trans fat labeling <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/lab-cat.html#transfat>

For the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) *trans* fat labeling statements, check the FSIS website: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Regulations_&Policies/Trans_Fat_Declaration_on_Product_Labeling/index.asp or call the USDA Meat and Poultry hotline 1-800-535-4555 for meat and poultry labeling.

For dietary guidance published jointly by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA), please visit the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005* (sixth edition) website: <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/>.

To find more tips and suggestions on making healthy food choices and being active every day, please visit USDA's *MyPyramid* food guidance system website: <http://www.mypyramid.gov>.

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