



## Study labels to reduce trans fats

**I just heard something on the news about trans fats, but I thought they weren't allowed in food anymore. Am I wrong?**

You are wrong, but it's easy to see why you're confused.

Ever since 2006, when companies had to start explicitly listing trans fats on Nutrition Facts labels, they've pulled something of a vanishing act.

The new regulation was coupled with a trans fat awareness campaign. Rather than taking the risk that consumers would leave their product on the shelf in favor of more heart-healthy alternatives, many manufacturers found ways to reformulate their products without trans fats. In addition, some communities, including New York City and Boston, have banned trans fats at restaurants, bakeries and similar establishments.

Even though "0" trans fat on a Nutrition Facts label doesn't always mean exactly "0" (see below), the efforts to reduce trans fats in foods seem to be having an effect. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed the level of trans-fatty acids in the blood of white adults in the United States dropped by 58 percent from 2000 to 2009. (The CDC also is looking at trans fat levels in other race and ethnic groups, as well as children and adolescents.)

Trans fats have been targeted because they increase bad LDL

cholesterol and decrease good HDL cholesterol — a nasty combination. There's substantial evidence that links them with a higher risk of heart disease and stroke. In fact, a recent study in the journal *Annals of Neurology* found that post-menopausal women who consumed the most trans fats had a 39 percent increased risk of stroke.

More about trans fats:

- Grazing animals produce trans fats naturally, so there is some in beef, lamb and full-fat dairy products. But most trans fats in the diet are made when liquid vegetable oil is processed into solid fat.

- Nutrition Facts labels can say foods contain "0" trans fat if they have less than 0.5 grams per serving. To be certain a food is trans-fat free, look in the ingredients listing to make sure "partially hydrogenated" oil isn't listed. If it is, you're getting some trans fat.

- Check the serving size. If you normally use more than one teaspoon of non-dairy creamer, for example, you're probably getting more trans fat than you realize.

- Pay special attention to foods you consume often — including baked goods, crackers, breakfast cereals, frozen foods, microwave popcorn, and other snacks and processed foods.

- Check nutrition information at restaurants. If it's not available, ask.

*Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*



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**Editor:**

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