

Trans-Fats: What Are They?

Trans-fats are banned in New York City. New foods are being promoted as “trans-fat free!” So what are trans-fats?

Trans-fat is created when a liquid fat is turned into a solid. A great example is stick margarine. Vegetable oil is processed into a solid so that it lasts longer in your refrigerator, tastes good on toast, and is sliceable. The key word for this process is “hydrogenated.”

In the 1980s, people were most concerned about saturated fat, which clogs your arteries by raising LDL or “bad” cholesterol. This LDL cholesterol sticks in your blood vessels creating dirty, clogged pipes. Eventually, blood can’t get through these clogged blood vessels causing a heart attack.

Saturated fat is found in animal products, such as butter. Stick margarine was created to avoid saturated fat. However, scientists later found that another, even worse monster was created with stick margarine.

Trans-fats not only raise your LDL cholesterol, they also drop your HDL or “good” cholesterol levels. HDL cholesterol work like little plumbers, cleaning out the LDL cholesterol in your clogged blood vessels. More LDL = more buildup. More LDL + less plumbers = major problem.

The best way to help your heart & blood vessels is to choose foods low in both saturated & trans-fat. Look at the nutrition facts label for how much fat is in your foods. Choose spread margarines, whipped margarines & oils instead of solid. Spread & whipped margarines have less saturated fat than butter & look for ones that are also trans-fat free.

Look for trans-fat free cookies, cakes, desserts & fried products such as potato chips and French fries. Often these products are made with stick margarine or fried in products full of trans-fat and saturated fat.