Fact Sheet
Trim Trans Fat
for Healthier School Meals

We know that fats and oils are a part of a healthful diet, but the type of fat makes a difference to heart health. Although a small amount of trans fat is found naturally in foods like meat, butter, and milk, most trans fat is formed when hydrogen is added to an oil to make a more solid fat like shortening or margarine. This process, called “hydrogenation,” increases shelf life and helps maintain the flavor and texture of foods.

You can reduce the amount of trans fat your students consume by eliminating products with trans fat or serving them less often. Check the Nutrition Facts labels and note the amount of “trans fat” listed just below “saturated fat.” Food manufacturers can show “0 grams of trans fat” if a serving contains less than 0.5 gram.

Nutrition Facts

Recipe for Success

■ Review your menus. Serve foods with trans fat less often.

■ Check Nutrition Facts labels and ingredient lists on similar foods. Choose the food with the lowest amount of trans fat. Review nutrition labels frequently, as manufacturers change products regularly. Foods that list “shortening” or “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil” as an ingredient may contain trans fats.
**USDA Commodity Foods**

USDA eliminated *trans* fats from its frozen potato products and stopped offering solid shortening. For more information about USDA commodity products, visit FNS’ website: [www.fns.usda.gov/fdd](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd).

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**Messages for Students**

- Be “label able.” Learn to read the Nutrition Facts label so you can make healthier food choices.
- For a fast and fun snack, grab nuts and fruits instead of cookies and chips.

**Did You Know?**

Processed foods and oils provide about 80 percent of *trans* fats in the diet, compared with about 20 percent that occur naturally in food from animal sources.

These categories of processed foods contribute to the 80 percent:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Foods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40%</td>
<td>cakes, cookies, crackers, pies, bread, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17%</td>
<td>margarine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8%</td>
<td>fried potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>potato chips, corn chips, popcorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>household shortening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5%</td>
<td>other foods including breakfast cereal and candy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**For more information:**

- MyPyramid.gov
- [www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html#whatis](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html#whatis)

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**Talk with your current food vendors about new products** with little or no *trans* fat. Look for vendors that have eliminated or reduced *trans* fats in their products.

**Write specifications** for food products with no *trans* fat.

**Serve nonbreaded meat products**, which usually contain less *trans* fat than breaded products.

**Serve fish often.** Most fish are lower in *trans* fat than other meats. Fish such as trout and salmon contain omega-3 fatty acids which may protect against coronary heart disease.

**Offer fruits and vegetables** to satisfy kids’ tastes for sweet and crunchy foods instead of cakes, cookies, and candy.

**Take the HealthierUS School Challenge!** Go for the Gold and offer meals that include more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, which are naturally low in *trans* fat!