

TRANS FAT DEMONSTRATION GUIDE : “HERE’S THE REAL SKINNY ON FAT”

INGREDIENTS FOR A DYNAMITE DEMONSTRATION

- ➔ Food labels for products containing trans fat
- ➔ Small cereal bowl
- ➔ Shortening
- ➔ Drinking straws (one for each participant)
- ➔ Napkins/hand wipes

STEP 1- INTRODUCE TRANS FAT

Begin by holding up 3 or 4 sample food labels for chips/cookies/crackers/pizza/popcorn, and ask:

- Do you eat any of these products?
- Do you think they are healthy?
- Do you think they could cause you serious (or fatal) health problems? ...Let’s find out!

Each of these products contains **trans fat**, which is the only man-made fat in our food supply, and it is the most deadly fat you can eat.

STEP 2 - DEMONSTRATE BLOCKED ARTERIES

To demonstrate how deadly trans fat is...try the following experiment:

First, take a drinking straw and look through it. (Hold up a straw). This is what a clean, clear healthy artery in the body looks like.

Second, dip the end of the straw in a bowl of shortening and then try to look through it... It’s impossible, because the straw is totally blocked, the same as a blocked artery. When arteries become blocked, too little blood flows to the heart and causes a heart attack. And too little blood flow to the brain causes a stroke.

The biggest reason for blocked arteries is that we eat too much bad fat, and trans fat is the most dangerous. So, that clogged straw you’re holding in your hand represents a stroke or a heart attack about to happen!



Alameda County Public Health Department Nutrition Services • 3600 Telegraph Ave. • Oakland, CA 94609

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STEP 3 - EXPLAIN THE DANGERS OF TRANS FAT

Where is all this deadly trans fat coming from? We’ve been eating trans fat in our food for a long time, and it is very damaging to our bodies! Unfortunately, trans fat can be found in almost all of our favorite packaged foods including crackers, cookies, chips, frozen dinners and french fries— and, it is the worst fat you can eat.

Trans fat is so unnatural that the body doesn’t know how to process it, which leads to a number of serious health problems. Trans fat is created by heating vegetable oil to a very high temperature and bubbling hydrogen through it until it becomes a dark, bad smelling grease that is then bleached with corrosive chemicals. (Doesn’t that sound appetizing?) This process destroys all of the oil’s good nutrients. It is then filtered and deodorized into a white, odorless, tasteless artificial fat that looks like the shortening on your table and is **EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TO THE HUMAN BODY!**

STEP 4 - READ AND UNDERSTAND THE FOOD LABELS

Let’s take a look at an easy way to avoid eating trans fat. (*Take out the food label for microwave popcorn.*)

Every food package is labeled with a Nutrition Facts box and a list of ingredients. Take a look at the Nutrition Facts (*point to the list of fats in the Nutrition Facts box*) that show the amount of grams for total fat, saturated fat and trans fat.

If there is a number bigger than “zero” next to trans fat, there is trans fat in the product, and it is unhealthy.

Here is the tricky part of the trans fat game! Even if the number next to trans fat on the label is “zero,” you still cannot be sure if the product contains trans fat. Manufacturers only need to show trans fat on the label if a serving has half a gram of trans fat or more. So, you always have to look at the list of ingredients on the label to see if manufacturers are “hiding” trans fat in the product.

If the words “*partially hydrogenated oil*” are included in the ingredients, then the product does contain trans fat and you should avoid it!



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Now take a look at the popcorn label. *Show the label and ask:*

- Is there any trans fat in this product?
- If so, how much?
- Where do you find the amount of trans fat that is in this popcorn?

The most important thing to remember about trans fat is really very simple:

STAY AWAY FROM IT!

When looking at the food label, you may have noticed it also shows numbers for total fat and saturated fat. [Point to these areas on the label]

The American Heart Association recommends that you limit the total fat that you eat to avoid obesity and related health problems. It also recommends that you eat as little as possible of saturated fat, which is animal fat like the kind found in butter, lard, bacon grease, cheese, hamburgers, and fried chicken. Like trans fat, saturated fat also clogs arteries and greatly increases the risk of heart disease and stroke.

STEP 5 - MAKE HEALTHY CHOICES

Now that you know where to look for trans fat, you can stay away from it. And here are some tips for eating better and staying healthier:

1. Use what you have learned today and take a few minutes to read the food labels.
2. Stay away from trans fat!
3. Limit your total consumption of fat. Use saturated fat sparingly and, whenever possible, choose healthier fats like olive oil and canola oil.
4. Be kind to your body and instead of packaged snacks and baked goods, choose fresh, natural foods such as fruits, nuts and vegetables.
5. Engage in daily physical activity. Get at least 30 minutes a day of physical activity for adults, and at least 60 minutes a day for children.

