

The skinny on *trans* fat

*Saturated or unsaturated?
Mono or poly? Good or bad?*



The FDA has taken action to phase out the remaining *trans* fat in the nation's food supply.

Unlike mono and poly unsaturated fats, which are liquid at room temperature, or saturated fats, which occur naturally in animal products such as butter and meat, *trans* fat is manmade by adding a hydrogen atom to oil and changing its molecular structure.

Crisco may have been the original product for *trans* fat—a cheap way to add fat to foods and make them shelf-stable. Now, it can be found in everything from donuts to prepackaged cookie dough to boxed macaroni and cheese to microwave popcorn.

“If it's easy to make and it's a convenience food, it may have some *trans* fat in it,” according to experts at Penn State Hershey Medical Center.

Research has shown that *trans* fat increases bad cholesterol (LDL) levels and lowers levels of the good cholesterol (HDL) in the body. That can lead to a number of problems, such as hardening of the arteries, heart attack, heart disease, and stroke.

The FDA's action will remove *trans* fat from a category of foods known as “Generally Recognized As Safe” and place it in the category of food additive, which could open manufacturers up to liabilities if they don't find an alternative.