

Healthy Schools – Trans Fat Standards Regulation

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is reducing trans fat important?

Research on the consumption of trans fat has identified alarming health risks including increased risk of developing coronary heart disease¹. Heart disease is the second leading cause of death in Canada². Due to the health risks associated with trans fat, a Federal Trans Fat Task Force completed a report that was submitted to the Minister of Health in 2006. The report made broad recommendations regarding the immediate need to limit trans fat in the Canadian food supply.

What is trans fat and where is it found?

Trans fat is a type of fat that is mostly artificially produced. Trans fat is formed when liquid vegetable oils are hardened to become solid fat in a process called hydrogenation. Trans fat is found in food products made with (or cooked in) shortening or partially-hydrogenated vegetable oil, such as commercial baked goods, crackers, salty snack foods, fried foods, fast foods, microwave popcorn, and other convenience foods. Trans fat is associated with an increased risk of heart disease because it increases “bad” Low Density Lipoprotein (or LDL) cholesterol and lowers the “good” High Density Lipoprotein (or HDL) cholesterol at the same time. Because of this, trans fat is more harmful than saturated fat. For more information and links to resources visit www.simcoemuskokahealth.org and go to ‘health facts’ and then ‘healthy eating’.

Which types of foods usually have trans fat?

Spreads: Hydrogenated (hard) margarine and shortening.

Commercial baked goods: Donuts, muffins, cakes, pastries, cookies, hard tortillas, pies and tarts.

Pre-Packaged snack foods: Chips, crackers, microwave popcorn, granola bars, cereal bars, wafers, pudding cups.

Breaded and deep fried foods: Chicken nuggets, burgers, fish sticks, onion rings, hash browns, dumplings and French fries.

Ready to eat and frozen foods: Quiches, burritos, pizza, pizza pockets, egg rolls, meat or vegetable pies or pastries, breakfast sandwiches, waffles, toaster pastries and frozen potato products.

Convenience foods: Taco shells, pie crust, pancake and waffle mixes, muffin and cake mixes, icing, instant soups and noodle kits, gravy mixes, whipped toppings, ready to bake dough, puff pastry, hot chocolate mix and coffee whitener.

Will the reduction of trans fat in schools result in healthier diets?

Reducing trans fat is one small step in the right direction, but this alone will not result in healthier diets. Trans fat is just one component of fat, and even if trans fat is eliminated, a product can still be high in fat or deficient of other nutrients.

In September 2011, The Ministry of Education implemented the School Food and Beverage Policy that provides nutrition standards related to the amount of essential nutrients, fat, sugar, sodium and fibre in food and beverages sold in schools. Schools are encouraged to create healthy school nutrition environments over time by addressing all areas of the school that food and beverages are promoted or sold.

Staff at the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit are available to support schools that have identified healthy eating as a priority and wish to work towards creating a healthy school nutrition environment. Contact the health unit at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

What are schools required to do related to trans fat?

The trans fat standards require that any food, beverages or ingredients used in preparing foods and beverages that are sold in a school must not exceed specific limits or percentages of trans fat set out by Ontario Regulation 200/08 of the Education Act. Schools are allowed to designate up to ten (10) special events days where the trans fat standards do not apply.

What are the limits for trans fat in food and beverages sold in schools?

The trans fat content must be as follows:

- Vegetable oils and soft margarines: ≤2% of the total fat content
- Any other food, beverage or ingredient: ≤5% of total fat content

When did the Trans Fat Standards come into effect?

Amendments were made to the Education Act through Bill 8, Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools Act, 2008 and received royal assent April 27, 2008. The related trans fat standards regulation came into effect September 1, 2008.

How can my school avoid trans fat?

- Follow *Canada's Food Guide* and choose vegetables, fruit, whole-grains, lean meats, beans & lower-fat milk products.
- Choose foods that have not been deep-fried or fried.
- Read ingredient lists and choose products that are non-hydrogenated or 'trans fat free' or have '0 trans fat'.
- Cook, bake and prepare foods with liquid vegetable oils or soft, spreadable margarines.
- Refer to the SMDHU Healthy Foods for Healthy Schools resource (can be requested from Your Health Connection)

- Refer to the Healthy Food for Healthy Schools section on the Ministry of Education website for information about interpreting and implementing the nutrition standards.
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/policy.html>
- For more information on healthy eating, visit www.simcoemuskokahealth.org or www.eatrightontario.ca.

How do I know if a product contains saturated or trans fat?

Most packaged foods sold in Canada must have a Nutrition Facts table that states the amount of saturated plus trans fat contained in a specified amount of food. It is important to select food products with the lowest levels of saturated and trans fat possible. Food products that contain less than 0.2 grams of trans fat per serving can claim to be free of trans fat. You can also tell if a food has trans fat by reading the ingredient list. Avoid foods that include “partially-hydrogenated vegetable oil” or “vegetable oil shortening” in the ingredient list.

How do I figure out how much trans fat is in a product or ingredient?

The Nutrition Facts table on a food or beverage label will tell you the total amount of fat and the amount of saturated and trans fat combined. To figure out whether the product meets the trans fat standard apply the following formula:

To calculate % Trans Fat:

Nutrition Facts		Valeur nutritive	
Per 1/8 tray (283 g) / pour 1/8 de plat			
Amount Teneur		% Daily Value % Valeur quotidienne	
Calories / Calories	140		
Fat / Lipides	5 g	8%	
Saturated / saturés	1 g	13%	
+ Trans / trans	1.5 g		
Cholesterol / Cholestérol	15 mg		
Sodium / Sodium	160 mg	7%	
Carbohydrate / Glucides	23 g	8%	
Fibre / Fibres	1 g	4%	
Sugars / Sucres	13 g		
Protein / Protéines	1 g		

$$\frac{\text{Trans Fat (g)}}{\text{Total Fat (g)}} \times 100$$

Use the product label and this simple formula to calculate the % Trans Fat in all food products sold in your school.

In this example:

$$\frac{1.5 \text{ g}}{5.0 \text{ g}} \times 100 = 30\%$$

This product would not be allowed because 30% trans fat exceeds the trans fat standards by 25%.

What about food or beverages sold for a school event that occurs outside of the school?

If the food or beverage sold is intended for consumption on school grounds, then the trans fat standards apply. If the intention is for the food or beverage to be consumed off school grounds, then the trans fat standards do not apply.

For example, foods or beverages that are sold to communities for school-related fundraisers are not intended to be consumed on school property, so do not need to meet trans fat standards. Yet, events such as a school dance or a bake sale that occur on school property would be included.

What ‘other than school purposes’ would be exempt from the trans fat standards?

The trans fat regulations do not apply in cases where schools are used by community groups or organization for activities or events that occur after school hours.

What is a ‘special event day’?

Events that occur on occasion (as opposed to on a regular basis), are considered special. Examples might include graduation celebrations, meet-the-teacher night, or a single special fundraising event. Ongoing or regular events such as pizza or hot dog days are not considered special events. These occasions must meet the trans fat standards at all times.

What about food and beverages that are not sold, but are provided to children in schools?

The trans fat standards do not apply to foods and beverages that are not sold to students. However, schools may want to take this opportunity to consider making it a rule to serve healthy food at all times in a school setting. The research related to trans fat demonstrates a strong association with health risks such as coronary heart disease. The school curriculum teaches children about the importance of healthy eating. This is a great opportunity to make the school environment consistent with the curriculum. For more information on creating a healthy school nutrition environment contact the health unit at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org or 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

What is ruminant meat?

Ruminant mammals are those that have even-toed hooves and include cattle, sheep, goats, deer, and other less common to North American diet like giraffes, antelope and wildebeest. These mammals have a two-step digestive process that involves regurgitating food from a chamber of their stomach called a rumen. This process is called rumination.

Many of the common ruminant mammals in North America also produce milk. The milk from these mammals is used to produce milk and milk products like cheese, yogurt, etc. These products will also contain small amounts of trans fats. Trans fat from these sources does not appear to have the same negative effect as trans fats made during food processing. Yet, ruminant meats are also a source of saturated fat which is associated with health risks³. Although the trans fat standards exempt food, beverages or ingredients where trans fat originates exclusively from these sources, it is wise to choose lean meats and lower fat dairy products at all times.

How do I know if foods come exclusively from ruminant meats or dairy products?

To figure out whether the trans fat in a food comes exclusively from ruminant meat or dairy products read the ingredient list to find out the sources of fat in the product. If the fat sources are dairy (milk, cheese, milk or modified milk ingredients, milk powder, condensed or evaporated milk, ghee, ice cream, cream, butter or butterfat) or ruminant meat (beef, lamb, goat, deer, bison), then all the trans fat in the product is exempt. If there are other fat sources like oils, fish, eggs, nuts/seeds, avocados, wheat germ, then the product is not exempt.

The following sample food label provides a good example:

Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 pudding cup (99 g) pour 1 coupe de pouding (99 g)	
Amount Teneur	% Daily Value % valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 160	
Fat / Lipides 6 g	9 %
Saturates / saturés 2 g + Trans / trans 2 g	20 %
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 1 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 150 mg	6 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 23 g	8 %
Fibre / Fibres 1 g	4 %
Sugars / Sucres 17 g	
Protein / Protéines 3 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	0 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	0 %
Calcium / Calcium	6 %
Iron / Fer	10 %

This pudding product is a dairy product, yet the ingredient list indicates there is additional fat added in the form of 'hydrogenated soybean oil'. Therefore, this product is not exempt and must meet the trans fat standards.

INGREDIENTS: SKIM MILK FROM CONCENTRATE (WATER, CONCENTRATED SKIM MILK), SUGAR, WATER, HYDROGENATED SOYBEAN OIL, MODIFIED CORN STARCH, COCOA, SALT, COFFEE POWDER, SODIUM STEAROYL-2-LACTYLATE, VANILLA EXTRACT.

INGRÉDIENTS : LAIT ÉCRÉMÉ FAIT DE CONCENTRÉ (EAU, LAIT ÉCRÉMÉ CONCENTRÉ), SUCRE, EAU, HUILE DE FÈVES DE SOYA HYDROGÈNÉE, AMIDON DE MAÏS MODIFIÉ, CACAO, SEL, POUDRE DE CAFÉ, STÉAROYL-2-LACTYLATE DE SODIUM, EXTRAIT DE VANILLE.

References:

1 TRANSforming the Food Supply – Report of the Trans Fat Task Force Submitted to the Minister of Health. June 2006. Available at http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/gras-trans-fats/tf-ge/tf-gt_rep-rap_e.html.

2 2009 Census-, CANSIM table [102-0561](#)- Leading causes of death, total population, by age group and sex, Canada, Statistics Canada.
Position of the American Dietetic Association and Dietitians of Canada: Dietary Fatty Acids. J or American Dietetic Association. Sept 2007, Vol 107(9); 1599-1611.