

Trans Fats

Trans Fats and Girl Scout Cookies®

Guidelines released by the government on January 12, 2005, recommend that Americans limit trans fat consumption to no more than 2 grams per day.

ABC was the first Girl Scout Cookie Baker to offer Girl Scout Cookies with zero grams trans fat per serving. All of ABC Bakers' eight items—including the “flagship” Girl Scout Cookie, Thin Mints®, and the ever popular Caramel deLites®--have a nutritional value of zero grams trans fat per serving.

The Facts About Trans Fats:

There is an increasing body of research that indicates that trans fats in our food may contribute to a number of health problems, possibly including breast cancer, Alzheimer's, heart disease, multiple sclerosis, macular degeneration and diabetes. Some of the latest research indicates trans fats may be linked to premature aging, memory loss, reproductive problems and immune dysfunction.

Trans fats were introduced in the early 20th century and became very popular in the 1950's because they were less expensive and thought to be a healthier alternative to saturated fats. Trans fats are described as “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” because adding hydrogen molecules to unsaturated liquid fats creates them. Hydrogenation makes the oils solid or semi-solid at room temperature, leading to the development of “butter replacement” products such as spreads made from corn oil. These substitutes found a place on many post-war American tables due to both cost and the belief that, because they were made from unsaturated fats, they were healthier than saturated fats like butter.

Hydrogenation and partially hydrogenated oils were used in commercial products for the same reasons as well as for other properties such as a creamy texture and long shelf life. Over the years, there was a proliferation of products containing trans fats in response to demands for both home and commercial use.

It is now known that there is an important difference between saturated fats and trans fats. The former increases both good and bad cholesterol while the latter raises bad cholesterol without boosting good cholesterol. This means that trans fats are potentially more damaging to the heart than saturated fats.

Now that the prevailing wisdom about trans fats has changed, cookies in homes, restaurants and food manufacturing facilities are seeking to reduce or eliminate the use of trans fats. As of January 2006, all packaged foods in the U.S. must show trans fat content as part of the nutritional labeling.