

Trim Trans Fat And Trim Weight

Trans fats have come under fire (rightfully so), with states, cities and theme parks working towards banishing them from parts of the food supply. This is good news as trans fats have been linked to heart disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, macular degeneration and gallstones. Now there is speculation that they may tamper with weight management efforts as well. How so?

Research from Wake Forest University in North Carolina found that a higher trans fat intake resulted in greater weight gain. This study fed 51 monkeys a high-trans fat diet (8% of calories) for 6 years. The other half of monkeys was fed a low-trans fat diet. Upon the end of the study, despite the same calorie and overall fat intakes, the high-trans fat fed monkeys' weight increased on average 7% compared to almost 2% for the monkeys on the low-trans fat diet. Although animal studies are not always a harbinger of what will occur in humans, these results further validate the benefits of eliminating or severely limiting trans fats. The best ways to do this include:

- Check the ingredient list for hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils. This is a red flag indicating the presence of trans fats.
- Check the Nutrition Fact panel for grams of trans fat - look for zero. This is not a foolproof because the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) allows food products with less than 0.5 grams of trans fats per serving to state "zero grams trans" or "trans free." Given the goal is to consume no more than 1% of calorie intake, this doesn't take long to add up. For example, a 1500-calorie diet would translate into aiming for no more than 1.5 grams of daily trans fat.
- Watch portion sizes. Larger servings mean more trans fats as well as other calorie containing ingredients. Being trans-free does not mean it is free of sugar, high fructose corn syrup and ultimately calories.
- Limit store-bought baked goods, stick margarines, doughnuts and fast-food French fries - common offenders of excess trans fats.
- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables - the truly reliable trans free foods.