

The Hidden Fat – If You Are Eating This Fat You Are Hurting Your Performance

Chances are the last meal you ate had a fat in it that wasn't on the label and is twice as dangerous as the saturated fat that we all know about. Trans fatty acids are man-made fats that are designed to give texture to the cream inside the Oreo and the cookie shell on the outside. Crackers like Cheez-its, Graham Crackers, and even healthier choices like baked Wheat Thins get their crispiness from trans fatty acids. Fast food operators use oil that is rich in trans fatty acids to fry their foods.

When you eat saturated fats both the LDL (bad) and HDL (good) cholesterol rises. When you eat trans fatty acids the LDL level goes up but the HDL goes down. Trans fatty acids are about two times as bad as saturated fat for your lipid (cholesterol and triglyceride) levels says Dr. Meir Stampfer, professor of epidemiology and nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health. It is also helpful to understand that monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats actually lower cholesterol and reduce heart disease risk when eaten in place of saturated fats and trans fatty acids.

Trans fatty acids are mostly found in fast foods and processed foods including cookies, pastries, salty snacks and chips, microwave popcorn, breakfast cereal, margarine, and shortening. This accounts for approximately 40 percent of all the food on the grocery shelf.

How do you know if the food has trans fatty acids? Look at the list of ingredients. If it includes hydrogenated oil, partially hydrogenated oil, or vegetable shortening, the food likely contains trans fat. To determine the amount, add up the grams of saturated, monounsaturated, and polyunsaturated fats on the label. Subtract that sum from the number of grams of total fat. The difference is the amount of trans fat that is present in the food. The FDA will start to include trans fat on their labels starting in 2006 so until then you will have to do this simple math and look at the ingredient label to get a handle on how much trans fatty acids you are ingesting. How much is too much? Good question. Safe levels have not been established but since trans fatty acids provide no health benefits it is recommended that consumers eat as little as possible.

Some food companies are already working on getting the trans fatty acids out of their products. Frito Lay has already eliminated trans fatty acids from many of its snacks although they remain high in saturated fats. Whole Food Market, the world's largest retailer of natural and organic foods no longer sells products that contain trans fatty acids. Trans-fat-free margarine is increasingly available on the shelves of supermarkets.

The FDA estimates that with the new label and the education about the adverse health effects of trans fatty acids 600-1,200 cases of coronary heart disease and 250-500 deaths will be prevented annually. So read the labels and do some math to make your heart happy.

Remember to always plan ahead on what you are going to eat, obtain adequate protein in your diet, work on your flexibility and supplement your diet with a multivitamin and fish oil to help with recovery. Go to www.sciencebasedwellness.com to get your supplements today and help raise money for your association. Contact me if you have questions at alan@chasewellnessinc.com. Until next time.....