

Part 4, Chapter 37: Trans Fat and Margarine

In my younger days, I was addicted to Oreo cookies. Back then the creamy filling in the center was replete with trans fat. That wasn't a known problem at the time. However, it's even worse for the body than hydrogenated oil, described above. Authority Nutrition published an eye opening article on trans fat titled "Why Are Trans Fats Bad For You? The Disturbing Truth".^{1}

Trans fats, or trans fatty acids, are a form of unsaturated fat. Unlike saturated fats, which have no double bonds, unsaturated fats have at least one double bond in their chemical structure. This double bond can be either in the "cis" or "trans" configuration, which relates to the position of hydrogen atoms around the double bond. [In practical terms] this chemical structure is believed to be responsible for numerous health issues.^{2}

This article gets fairly detailed but here is the essence, the "bottom" line of the effect of trans fat on the body. It presents a balanced view.

- Both observational studies and clinical trials have found that trans fats significantly increase your risk of heart disease.
- It is possible that trans fats cause insulin resistance and drive type II diabetes, but the results from human studies are mixed.
- Clinical trials and observational studies both indicate that trans fats increase inflammation, especially in people who are overweight or obese.
- Trans fats can damage the inner lining of your blood vessels, causing a condition known as endothelial dysfunction. The effect on cancer risk is less clear.
- Consumption of trans fats has gone down significantly in recent years. However, current intake is still high enough to cause harm.^{3}

As with so many artificial foods, a small amount of this stuff won't hurt you. It's when it becomes a dominant part of your diet. Still, there is nothing natural about either hydrogenated nor trans fat. To my way of thinking, yea, like the picture on the right, it's basically a heart attack waiting to happen.



Trans fat is a main ingredient in many, not all, margarines. As a general consideration, as to which is better, margarine or butter, the answer is still butter. (The best answer is neither.) Still, it's rather like saying that the four-foot-five bully on the playground is better than the five-foot-five bully. They are both still bullies and neither margarine nor butter is particularly good for you. In my recipe book in the Amenities section, I have a recipe for "Vegan Butter Substitute" (<http://energyinmotionnow.com/Transformations/18-Am->



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[menities.pdf](#). It's actually quite good and fewer calories than butter and zero cholesterol. Still, I have to admit that I still use butter, though not very much. I NEVER use margarine, however.

Since both are carried in the dairy case, it's probably a matter of choosing your poison carefully. Still, to my way of thinking, I think I'll take the playground with no bullies, that is, with rare exceptions, I don't think either margarine or butter is good dietary choice.