

Factsheet on...

Trans Fats And Food Labelling

What Are Trans Fats?

Trans fats are chemically altered vegetable oils, produced artificially in a process called hydrogenation, which turns liquid oil into solid fat. Trans fats can be found in thousands of processed foods and are used because they are cheap, add bulk to products, have a neutral flavour and give products a long shelf life. Trans fats have no nutritional value.

Are Trans Fats Bad For You?

Trans fats are harmful and have been linked to high cholesterol, which can lead to health conditions such as heart attacks and strokes. A study, carried out by researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, USA, suggests that trans fats can also increase the risk of fertility problems, with results showing consuming just 4g of trans fats every day can lead to infertility in women.

Is Any Amount Of Trans Fats OK?

It is recommended that trans fats should make up no more than 2% of the calories we get from our diet. For adults, this is no more than about 5g a day.

Why Is Too Much Salt Bad For You?

High levels of salt in a diet are linked with high blood pressure, which can lead to stroke and coronary heart disease.

Why Is Saturated Fat Bad For You?

Eating a lot of saturated fat can increase the cholesterol in your blood. High levels of

cholesterol can increase your risk of a heart attack, stroke and narrowed arteries.

How Much Saturated Fat Is OK?

The Food Standards Agency states that most people in the UK eat too much saturated fat; about 20% more than the recommended maximum amount. The average man should have no more than 30g of saturated fat a day and the average women no more than 20g.

Which Foods Contain Most Saturated Fat?

Foods that are high in saturated fat include:

- Fatty cuts of meat
- Meat products, such as sausages and pies
- Butter, ghee and lard
- Cream, soured cream, crème fraiche and ice cream
- Cheese
- Pastries, cakes and biscuits
- Chocolate
- Some savoury and sweet snacks
- Coconut oil and palm oil

Why Are Trans Fats and Food Labelling Important Issues In Greater Manchester?

It is a well known fact that a diet, which is high in fat, salt and sugar, and low in fruit and vegetables, is a risk factor for many chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, obesity and poor dental health.

People in Greater Manchester suffer from a high level of avoidable coronary heart disease and cancer.



The Association of Greater Manchester
Primary Care Trusts

National projections show that by 2050, over 50% of women and 60% of men will be considered obese. If these national projections are applied to the population of Greater Manchester, there will be over 1.7 million men and women who will have excess weight in 2020.

Adults in Greater Manchester currently eat, on average, 9g of salt a day compared to the recommended maximum of 6g. Most of this salt intake comes from processed foods.

The average salt intake among children is above the recommended level and some consume as much salt as adults.

It is estimated that poor diet contributes to more than 100,000 deaths from heart disease, stroke and cancer across the UK each year. It is not always easy to ensure you are having a balanced diet, as it's not always possible to identify what's in processed or ready-made foods. That's why food labelling is so important.

What is the Greater Manchester Health Commission Doing?

The Greater Manchester Health Commission has agreed to support the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance suggesting that trans fats should be eliminated.

The Health Commission has agreed to initiate a Greater Manchester wide campaign to increase public awareness of trans fats in food and address the public's concerns about being 'tricked' into eating unhealthy foods by unsatisfactory food labelling.

One of the major ways trans fats appear is through the cooking processes for takeaway food and the Greater Manchester Food Liaison Group has already begun to work with around 4,000 takeaways to tackle this.

The Greater Manchester Health Commission is working to get the European Union to reverse its decision to not use traffic light food labelling on food and drink and acknowledge that the needs of consumers, rather than food manufacturers and retailers, should be given priority.

The Health Commission is working to get an integrated front-of-pack traffic light colour-coded system used as standard for food and drink products, to help consumers make an informed decision about the products they buy.

The eight North West MEPs are being lobbied to take the traffic light recommendations to the European Parliament and UK Ministers are being made aware of the views of appropriate organisations in Greater Manchester.

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