



TRANSFATS

Fats and oils are made up of fatty acids. Fatty acids are made up of chains of carbon and hydrogen atoms. What differentiates all the fatty acids is how these carbon and hydrogen atoms are configured. Some fats are saturated – meaning that they are full of hydrogen atoms – and some are polyunsaturated or monounsaturated. Saturated fats are solid at room temperature while polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature.

Naturally occurring trans-fatty acids are very healthy for the body. These fatty acids are found in grass-fed beef and milk. While CLA is an Omega-6 fatty acid, it behaves like an Omega-3 fatty acid in the body, a fatty acid that we are not getting enough of. According to Nina Planck, “A polyunsaturated omega-6 fat, CLA prevents heart disease (probably by reducing atherosclerosis) fights cancer, and builds lean muscle. CLA aids in weight loss in several ways: by decreasing the amount of fat stored after eating, increasing the rate at which fat cells are broken down, and reducing the number of fat cells...CLA inhibits growth of human cancer cells in vitro.” (Real Food: What to Eat and Why, Nina Planck)

On the other hand, trans-fatty acids (transfats) that result from hydrogenation or partial hydrogenation of vegetable oils are not healthy. These behave like saturated fatty acids in the body and have been shown to cause cancer, heart disease, and other inflammatory conditions. As Marion Nestle notes, “Hydrogenation causes some of the hydrogens in unsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids to flip abnormally from the same side of the carbon chain (in Latin, *cis*) to the opposite side (*trans*)...But the change to *trans* causes unsaturated fatty acids to stiffen. They behave a lot like saturated fatty acids in the body, where they can raise cholesterol and increase the risk of heart disease.” (What to Eat, Marion Nestle)

What to Do:

1. Make sure your meat is grass-fed and finished and your milk is from grass-fed cows.
2. Avoid Transfats in Hydrogenated or Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oils:
 - Read food labels and avoid any products that have vegetable shortening hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils
 - Stick to natural butter or olive oil when cooking
 - Eat fresh, seasonal foods

For More Information, check out:

What to Eat by Marion Nestle, PhD

Real Food: What to Eat and Why by Nina Planck

The Queen of Fats: Why Omega 3s Were Removed from the Western Diet and What We Can do to Repace Them, by Susan Allport

Dr. Andrew Weil's Guide to Heart Health, Dr. Andrew Weil