

# WHO's Caution & Concerns on Indian Cooking! Trans Fats Facts!

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World Health Organisation (WHO) has raised serious concerns on the usage of industrially manufactured trans fats containing products like “*Vanaspati*” by Indians for making Indian snacks and baked products. WHO believes that trans fats containing foods are responsible for over 5 lakh deaths worldwide every year and total elimination within the next 5 years from the global food supplies alone is the key to protect health and save human lives.

We find trans fats in most industrially produced hardened vegetable fats like “*Vanaspati ghee*” and margarine bread spreads. Some typical food products containing trans fats are farsans, deep fried snack items, savoury snacks (like popcorn), frozen pizzas, baked goods, margarine spreads, ready to use frostings, frozen desserts sold as ice creams, even chocolates products and coffee creamers. Food manufacturers often use them instead of healthier alternatives because they have a longer stable shelf life, does not affect texture, taste and are comparatively inexpensive to use thereby reducing production cost of such food products.

WHO's statement assumes much significance as Indian cooking not only involves widespread use of oils containing trans fats but are also many times directly responsible in producing them in our kitchen. Indian cooking that involves lots of frying and refrying, by reheating the same oil is largely responsible to produce trans fats that is harming our liver, heart also cause diabetes.

## WHO'S CONCERNS AND ADVICE

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO's Director General says, “Eliminating trans fats would represent a major victory in the global fight against cardiovascular disease.” WHO is advocating total removal of trans fats from the global food supply chain by 2023, by releasing a guide “REPLACE” that has six action points for all to follow viz., Review of dietary sources of trans fats, promoting replacement with alternative healthies fats, setting up a regulatory framework, assessing and monitoring trans fat content in food, creating awareness and finally enforcing regulation.

WHO advice that trans fats should be limited to less than 1% of food energy that is equivalent to a maximum of 2 gram of trans fats in a diet of 2000 calories per day. Government of India & FSSAI rules although restrict trans fats to 5% maximum in industrially produced “*Vanaspati*” studies show that “*Vanaspati*” used commonly in Indian Households,

restaurants and road side vendors contain 30-40% trans fats due to poor enforcement of regulations, improper usage practises by users and dominating food producers consistent efforts to thwart usage of FSSAI guideline rules and regulations. Many countries around the world only restrict the use of trans fats however; the United States of America (USA) is implementing a total ban on trans fats from June 2018.

## TRANS FATS AND DIET

Humans obtain trans fats in their diets from two main sources', viz., from naturally occurring trans fats from animal meat and dairy fats and from partially hydrogenated vegetable oil or “*Vanaspati*”. Trans fat forms when on adds hydrogen to liquid oil for converting it into solid fat.

## HEALTH CONCERNS OF CONSUMING TRANS FAT

Trans fats increases low-density lipoprotein (LDL, or “bad”) cholesterol, decrease high-density lipoprotein (HDL, or “good”) cholesterol and contribute to death due to coronary heart disease.

## WHAT CONSUMERS SHOULD DO TO REDUCE TRANS FAT CONSUMPTION?

- Read nutrition label & ingredient list, compare foods and choose ones with NIL or ZERO trans fat.
- Avoid foods containing “*Vanaspati*” or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.
- Choose foods low in trans fat, besides making sure they are also low in saturated fat and cholesterol.
- Select foods with 5% of the daily value or less.
- Remove partially hydrogenated oil in foods replacing them with increased use of mono and polyunsaturated fats without increasing saturated fat, from baked goods, frosting and other products currently containing significant amounts of trans fat.
- Avoid restaurants using partially hydrogenated oil.
- Talk with your favourite restaurant on the use of partially hydrogenated oils, advising them to change their frying and cooking oils to ones that do not contain “*Vanaspati*” or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils.
- Promote awareness among friends and associates about the harmful use and intake of partially hydrogenated oil in foods and cardiovascular risks of consuming trans fat.
- Eat a balanced diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains and lean sources of proteins with low fat or fat-free dairy product.