

# HEALTHY CONNECTIONS

Empowering our community one "body" at a time

Wellness Program of the African People's Education & Defense Fund, Inc. June 2004  
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## Trans Fats: A Phantom Killer

### The "stealth fat"

Trans fat lurks in a multitude of foods. It's not labeled. And it's bad for your heart. Here's how to avoid it.

Even if you've never heard of trans fat, chances are the last meal you ate was chock-full of them. Many seemingly heart-healthy foods, made with vegetable oils containing little saturated fat and no cholesterol, harbor the most heart-unfriendly fat of all: trans fat. And worse yet, you won't find a word about this health danger even if you read the "nutrition facts" food labels, because the FDA isn't requiring food manufacturers to list trans fat until 2006.

You'll find trans fats everywhere. "Crackers like Cheez-Its and even seemingly healthier snacks like baked Wheat Thins get their crispness from trans fat...Every chick McNugget at McDonald's, every french fry at Burger King, and virtually anything else fried at a fast food outlet is cooked in oil that contains trans fat," writes Kim Severson in *The Trans Fat Solution*.

Food manufacturers love trans fat because it improves the taste and texture of a vast number of foods while inexpensively increasing shelf life. And although small amounts of trans fat occur naturally in meat and dairy products, it's mostly found in fast foods and a supermarket's worth of processed foods: cookies, pastries,

salty snacks and chips, microwave popcorn, breakfast cereal, margarine, and shortening. FDA estimates that 40% of all food on grocery store shelves contains some trans fat.

Trans fat is created artificially by bubbling hydrogen gas through vegetable oil, a process called partial hydrogenation. That transforms some of the oil's unsaturated fat into trans fat, which helps stabilize the oil (making it useful for deep-frying and for packaged foods) and solidify it (making it suitable for margarine and many baked goods). But in terms of health, trans fat acts like saturated fat, the kind that clogs the arteries.

In July 2002, the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine published a report stating that trans fat worsens blood-cholesterol levels and almost surely increases the risk of heart disease. Indeed, trans fat appears to be harder on the heart than saturated fat. The institute concluded that people should consume as little trans fat as possible.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration ("FDA") has recently taken the position that "intake of trans fats should be as low as possible." There are recommended maximum daily allowances for total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium on the FDA approved Nutrition Facts labels on food packages. However, the FDA has refused to set a maximum recommended daily allowance for trans fats, because the only safe level is zero.

(Continued on Page )



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### Become a Mindful Eater

Don't eat while watching television, in a moving vehicle, standing up, or at a movie. This is called unconscious eating, which causes you to overeat beyond your satiation level.

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# Trans Fats: Phantom Killer, Continued from Page 1

According to the Harvard School of Public Health, 30,000 or more premature heart disease deaths are caused each year by trans fats from partially hydrogenated oils in our food supply. **That's one death from trans fat every 15 minutes.** On top of that, there are a far greater number of non-fatal but damaging heart attacks caused by trans fats.

## DOUBLE TROUBLE

There are four kinds of fats: monounsaturated fat, polyunsaturated fat, saturated fat, and trans fat. Monounsaturated fat and poly-unsaturated fat are the "good" fats.

In their natural state, most vegetable oils (except tropical oils) contain mainly unsaturated fats, which lower the "bad" LDL cholesterol level in the blood. But partial hydrogenation changes some of those healthful fats to trans fat, which raises LDL, just as saturated fat does.

Worse yet, most studies have found that trans fat lowers the "good" HDL cholesterol, too. So trans fats cause significant and serious lowering of HDL (good) cholesterol and a significant and serious increase in LDL (bad) cholesterol – even worse than saturated fat.

This is because trans fat clearly increases blood levels of two other suspected artery-clogging compounds: a fat-protein particle called lipoprotein(a) and triglycerides, another type of fat.

In addition, trans fat may help inflame and stiffen the arteries. It may even increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, which ages the arteries, and it causes or contributes to other serious health problems. Trans fats are placed into food to increase shelf life, but they decrease human life.

## HOW TO FIND TRANS FATS

The following strategies can help you with the more difficult task of targeting trans fat in fast or processed foods:

### \* Know "suspect" types of foods.

Trans fat turns up in many margarines and shortenings; deep-fried fast foods and some deep-fried snack foods; many commercial baked goods such as pies, cookies, and crackers; and various other common packaged items. There are some notable exceptions, however. Potato chips, pretzels, and salad dressings generally are not made with partially hydrogenated oil. While many peanut butters contain small amounts of hydrogenated oil, they typically contain only traces of trans.

\* **You can roughly calculate the trans-fat content** by adding up the grams of saturated, mono-unsaturated, and polyunsaturated fats if they are listed on the nutritional label. Subtract that sum from the number of grams of total fat. The difference is the amount of trans fat.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size: 1/4 Recipe (188g)	
Servings Per Recipe 4	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 199	Cal. from Fat 45
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 5g	<b>8%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>4%</b>
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 245mg	<b>10%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	<b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber 8g	<b>35%</b>
Sugars 0g	
<b>Protein</b> 10g	
Vitamin A 75%	Vitamin C 40%
Calcium 10%	Iron 20%

\* **Look for shortening or partially hydrogenated oil in the ingredient list.** The higher they appear on the list, and the more total fat on the label, the more trans fat the product probably contains.

This Nutrition Facts label shows 5 grams of fat, of which 1 gram is saturated fat. What are the other 4 grams? Perhaps 3 or 4 grams of trans fat? Trans fat content won't be listed until 2006.

\* **As a shortcut, look for products low in total fat, which means bad fats should be fairly low, too.** But keep in mind that foods can be fairly high in total fat yet quite healthful--unless you're watching your weight--if nearly all the fats are from unhydrogenated, nontropical vegetable oils.

\* **When calculating fat content, consider the amount you'd eat,** not the labeled serving size, which may be absurdly small.

\* Note that products can make claims such as "low saturated fat" and "extra lean" without considering trans fat, although the FDA intends to revise those definitions to limit the trans-fat content. One exception: "saturated fat free" means less than 0.5 gram each of saturated and trans fat per serving.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cutting back on saturated fat is still very important. There's little benefit in choosing a food that's low in trans fat if it's high in saturated fat, and vice versa.

► Pick lean meats and eat small portions.

► Choose low- or no-fat milk and cheese.

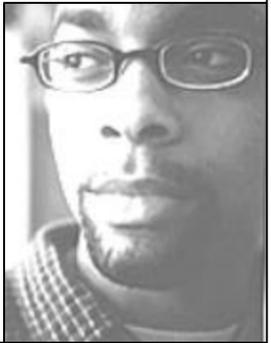
► Look for no trans fat margarines (health food stores), or soft or liquid margarines, which tend to have less trans fat than harder versions.

► At restaurants, deep-fried foods, biscuits, and pie crusts are usually made with partially hydrogenated oils. Most cooks in better restaurants sauté and stir-fry in unhydrogenated oils." You can ask the waiter or cook what kind of oils are used.

# Exercise Is Great For Your Brain

Many people find that there's a point in the day when they begin to feel tired and can't work as efficiently. They're suffering from brain fog! Some people experience a midmorning slump, for others, it is after lunch or late afternoon.

Believe it or not, the best cure for mental fatigue is often exercise. Exercise gets the heart beating faster, which increases the amount of oxygen sent to the brain. Exercise also increases the release of endorphins, chemicals that are natural stress relievers and antidepressants. So, when you find yourself nodding off at your desk, take out a pair of running shoes and go out for a brisk walk. If you are at home, take a bike ride or work out to an aerobic tape. You'll feel energized when you're done, and be better able to complete your work.



# Keys to Losing Your Stomach, Continued from Page

Energy is needed in order to maintain a continuous aerobic exercise. With the energy that you attain from complex carbohydrates, you will be able to perform your aerobic exercise at a high intensity which is important when burning fat from your abdominal region. To determine your ideal consumption of carbs, figure two grams of carbs per pound that you weigh, or 50% of your total caloric intake.

## Protein Builds Muscle, Cuts Fat

Protein is another macronutrient we must pay attention to when sculpting our body such as the abs. Proteins help build lean muscle mass and cut fat. Without protein, the sit-ups we often do will show little progress in terms of our muscular definition.

When we do resistance training such as stomach crunches, our muscle fibers are constantly being broken down. During rest, our muscles will then absorb protein in order to rebuild itself stronger and bigger. Without this vital macronutrient, attaining a "six-pack" stomach will be difficult. One gram per pound you weigh is recommended to determine your daily protein intake.

## Choose the Right Fats

Believe it or not, fat burns fat. Ironically, very low-fat diets make you lose muscle, results in constant hunger, and makes you gain weight. The trick is to choose the right fats.

Saturated fats should be avoided. Not only is it difficult to burn this type of fat, but it also contributes to heart disease, because it raises the blood cholesterol level.

Eating fats high in omega-3 fatty acids such as fatty fish and flaxseeds will supply energy to burn stored fats. It is also known to help with the maintenance of the brain. For most people, 15 to 20 percent of our daily calories should be in the form of fat. In addition, too much sodium in your diet makes you look bloated because salt retains water.

Nutrition is very important in trimming your mid-section. Knowing the correct foods and nutrients you eat is of vital importance because it is a determination of the amount of fat that you store on your stomach. If you don't consider your caloric

intake, your mineral intake, and the three macronutrients, your stomach fat-loss plan will be an endless struggle.

## Conclusion

We all want to lose fat and have a slim waist-line. When it comes to doing the work to get it, we often fall short because we don't implement one or two of the key three elements needed.

Many people think that 400 sit ups a day will take the fat away, but can't reach their goal. Their abs may have some muscle development, but you will not notice it due to the layer of fat that has not been burned.

Without a concrete nutrition program, you will add unwanted fat to your stomach even as you burn stored fat with cardio exercise and shape muscle through abdominal exercise.

Without all three of these elements that play a specific role, your goal to obtain a six pack in two weeks will be as unreal as the magazine you read that guarantees it.

# Keys to Successfully Losing Your Stomach

Fourth of a four part series

By Damon Reio, Manager,  
TyRon Lewis Community Gym

May's issue of the Healthy Connections newsletter featured the article "Keys to Losing Your Stomach" which gave an overview of cardiovascular training as a key element in burning fat to trim your mid-section. Without integrating aerobic exercise in your abdominal routine, strong and muscularly developed abs will be buried underneath a layer of fat.

At the same time, cardiovascular and abdominal resistance training cannot be the only means in trimming your waist-line. If you are in search of lean, muscularly developed abs, you must be critical of your nutritional intake.

**Foods and Nutrients Are Key**  
Paying close attention to the foods you eat, particularly your nutrition intake, is the third key element you must integrate in your program in order to achieve an "hour glass" physique.

It does not matter if you have a great abdominal and cardiovascular routine, if you do not take in consideration of the foods you ingest, you are only defeating the purpose by adding bulk to your stomach as you are burning and developing it through cardio and abdominal exercise.

The foods and nutrients we consume are synonymous to the food and water a plant receives in order to live. For example, if a flower is given the proper amount of water, nitrogen, and phosphorus, it will grow vibrant and have a long life-span. On the other hand, a flower that is fed contaminated water filled with salt and other impurities will wither away.

Our bodies are no different. The foods we eat that are high in fat, sugar and sodium play a significant role in the formation of a big belly and our overall health. It is very important to know about the foods you eat as well as the role that nutrients and macro-nutrients play in determining whether you carry a lot of fat on your stomach.

**Watch Your Calories**  
The amount of calories that you take in consistently determines your body weight and your fat-to-muscle percentage. If you are not aware of your daily caloric intake, it is easy to consume more than your allowance and gain extra weight.

To calculate your caloric intake, multiply your body weight by 14.5. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, in order to maintain your body weight you have to consume an average of 2,900 calories per day. In order to lose

weight, obviously you would want to decrease your caloric intake.

**What Type of Calories? Understanding Macronutrients**  
Like your caloric intake, it is also important to know the *type* of calories that you consume. There are three kinds of calories in the form of macronutrients that we eat: carbohydrates, protein, and fat. It is of vital importance to incorporate macronutrients in your diet.

**Complex Carbs Burn Fat**  
As mentioned in the previous article, carbohydrates conflict with our fat loss program when we consume more than we can burn because the extra carbs are stored as fat. In addition, carbohydrates high in the glycemic index and low in fiber (such as simple carbohydrates) metabolize slower than complex carbs and turn easily into fat.

You should consume complex carbs high in fiber such as oatmeal and brown rice in order to maintain optimal levels of energy. Complex carbohydrates will not only provide you with energy but also contribute to burning fat.  
*(Continued on Next Page)*

## All People's TyRon Lewis Community Gym Guide to Great Fitness

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# Fat Pills Don't Work! Join the Gym

By Damon Reio, Manager,  
All People's TyRon Lewis  
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On a daily basis, people ask me at the gym if we sell any "diet pills" or, "what are the best pills out that help burn fat?" My reply has always been the same: they don't work.

The very little that fat burning pills do will not help you burn a significant amount of fat. Professional body builders utilize these supplements days before their competition in order to better define their already low fat percentage physiques. Someone trying to lose 30 pounds will be very disappointed if they have hope in these over-hyped drugs.

Before being banned by the U.S government in April, Ephedra was the top selling chemical in diet supplements. Known as Ma Huang in Chinese, this chemical was only used as a medicine to help cure respiratory inflammation. In studies it was later that found that, combined with caffeine, it helped obese people lose weight.

The amount of fat loss from these supplements is not significant, but has been proven to help.

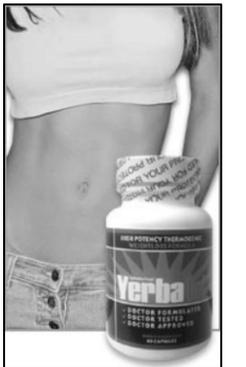
Unfortunately, the side affects are tremors, nervousness, and rapid heart beat. It is also dangerous to use Ephedra if you have high blood pressure. There have been several incidents where people have died from this drug. Therefore it has been banned from all medicine and wellness store shelves.

In order for the manufacturers of these "miracle diet pills" to survive despite the new ban, the brands now only contain caffeine. Caffeine has been proven to help boost your metabolism and help you lose weight. Caffeine helps you lose weight because it reduces your hunger. A continual lack of hunger actually promotes fat as your body breaks down muscle to conserve the fat. Most of the weight that you lose from not eating is from losing lean muscle.

Fat pills, diet pills or any pill that is guaranteed to help burn fat in a short amount of time is a gimmick. The fitness industry is racking up on the dough by selling products like Hydroxycut, Metabolife, and Exenodrine.

The best way to lose the fat is by lowering your daily caloric intake, performing cardiovascular exercise, and performing resistance exercises which will raise your metabolism. This is important in your weight loss program because you burn fat while your body is at rest (ie sleeping, watching TV, driving)

In other words, Join the TyRon Lewis Community Gym!



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