

NEWS RELEASE

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DOCTORS WARN: CUT OUT TRANS FATTY ACIDS

MINNEAPOLIS—The Minnesota Medical Association (MMA) is urging all Minnesotans to try to avoid trans fatty acids and recommending that hospitals and nursing homes limit the amount of TFAs in the food they serve.

“We hope that health care facilities will set a good example by limiting TFAs in the food they serve,” said Noel Peterson, M.D., president of the MMA. “Trans fatty acids increase the risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer.”

The MMA is a professional association representing more than 10,000 physicians throughout the state.

The health risks of trans fatty acids that led to the MMA’s recommendations are based on a strong body of scientific research, summarized in an article in the October issue of *Minnesota Medicine*, the monthly journal of the MMA.

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Trans fats are called a “potent health risk” in “Trans Fats: Foods, Facts, and Biology” by So Young Bu, Ph.D., a postdoctoral research fellow, and Douglas G. Mashek, Ph.D., an assistant professor, in food science and nutrition at the University of Minnesota.

Studies cited in the Minnesota Medicine article found that TFAs:

- Increase the risk of coronary heart disease.
- Increase LDL (bad) cholesterol and decrease the HDL (good) cholesterol levels,
- Cause inflammation leading to atherosclerosis (plaque build-up in arteries) and insulin resistance.
- Increase the risk of colon cancer by two-fold in postmenopausal women,
- Are linked to a higher risk of breast cancer and early stage prostate cancer.
- Lead to a higher incidence of type 2 diabetes.

TFAs, which can be found in margarine, frying oil, snacks such as cookies, cakes, and popcorn, are used to increase the shelf life of processed foods and to keep cooking oils from becoming rancid.

In 2006 the FDA required all food labels to include TFA content if the item contained more than .5 g per serving. If the item contains less than .5 the TFA content can be listed as 0. The words “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil” signal the presence of trans fats.

“It’s important to read food labels and try to avoid trans fatty acids, which can lead to life-threatening disease,” said Dr. Peterson.