

## **Hydrogenated Fats**

Where do they come from?

Hydrogenated fat and vegetable oil is a product of food processing. The process involves bubbling hydrogen through the fat, to improve the texture, flavour and shelf life. The result of this process is a more solid fat, called hydrogenated fat or hydrogenated vegetable oil, which is used as an ingredient in many processed foods. Trans Fats (trans fatty acids) are bi-products of the hydrogenation process. Unfortunately these contain no nutritional value, they are thought to be as harmful to heart health as saturated fat and should certainly be viewed with caution and avoided where possible.

It is all very confusing though.

'Hydrogenated Fat' should appear on the label of UK produced foods but 'Trans Fats' doesn't have to be shown. The lower down the ingredient lists hydrogenated fats appear, the smaller their content and the smaller the risk of your food product containing trans fatty acids.

EU produced foods do not have to show either fats, hydrogenated fats or trans fatty acids.

In the US they do label trans fatty acids.

One of the UK's leading supermarkets has indicated that even products in its "health food selection" contain some hydrogenated fats.

Hydrogenated fats are commonly used in some own-brand products and are always included in ingredients lists.

Let us have a look at a few hydrogenated fat culprits. Some of these could come as quite a surprise to you.

### **Muller Yogz**

Muller Yogz is clearly marketed for children. The packaging says it is ideal for lunch boxes (any mum's nightmare) and is made with wholemilk.

### **Ambrosia Splat banana flavour custard**

Who would dream of custard containing hydrogenated vegetable oil? This though is an excellent example of hydrogenated vegetable oil being used to extend the shelf life of a product.

### **Schwartz for Fish Lemon Butter Sauce Mix**

We are constantly encouraged to increase our fish intake. Fish is not regarded as one of the nation's favourite foods (except of course fish and chips from you local chippy which is probably loaded with trans fatty acids due to the cooking oil). It is not always easy to prepare and present fish to the family, so using a quick sauce mix like this one (the packet states simply 'mix and heat') could be an easy trap for you to fall into.

### **Blue Riband Crisp Wafer biscuits**

These wafer biscuits are covered in real milk chocolate. One wafer biscuit contains 99 calories which appears in big red writing on the packaging. It is also advertised as being light, delicious and perfect for lunches, school and relaxing.

### **Ready Made Chilli Con Carne**

With busy lifestyles this is a perfect quick ready-made main meal. Although a homemade Chilli Con Carne could be a very healthy meal, containing kidney beans (very high in fibre) and usually served on steamed rice or a jacket potato, in this case Hydrogenated Rapeseed Oil is the third ingredient on the ingredient list.

You will find hydrogenated vegetable oils in a wide variety of foods, from the cheapest to the most expensive. They are even in some foods which are advertised as being 'good for you', for example low calorie soups, vegetarian products and reduced fat foods. A further problem is you're unlikely to know what fat is used in takeaway foods and the food you eat in restaurants and cafes. Fish and chips, for example are very likely to be cooked in fats high in trans fats.

You need to scour ingredients labels for fats. The higher up the list, the more the product contains. Ideally manufacturers should stop using these oils. If used they should be labelled along with saturated fats.