

BC's new trans fat regulation

BC has used the new Public Health Act to restrict industrially produced trans fat in food service establishments. Here's what you should know.

On 7 March 2009, the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport announced that BC will be the first province in Canada to restrict industrially produced trans fat in all food prepared, served, or offered for sale in BC food service establishments.

There is a significant and growing body of evidence linking trans fats to

ruminant meat (i.e., beef, lamb, sheep, bison) and dairy products; and industrially produced, formed during partial hydrogenation, a process used to harden and stabilize liquid vegetable oils. The majority of trans fats in our diets are industrially produced and found in partially hydrogenated oils, spreads, and margarines and hidden

industrially produced trans fat in foods where consumers have little ability to know the trans fat levels. Packaged foods sold directly to the consumer that have a federally approved nutrition facts table on the package are exempt from the regulation.

The trans fat regulation is the first regulation approved under the new Public Health Act, Health Impediments section.⁴ The regulation follows the recommendations of Health Canada's Trans Fat Task Force, which were released in 2007 and restrict the amount of trans fat content of oils and soft, spreadable margarines to 2% of total fat and restrict trans fat content of all other foods to 5% of total fat content of the food.¹

To ensure industry is making progress in meeting the restrictions, Health Canada has been monitoring the food supply via the Trans Fat Monitoring Program and expects the food industry to achieve the trans fat limits by June 2009. Results from the label review of the *Third Set of Trans Fat Monitoring Data* in February 2009 indicate that only 65% of packaged cookies and 58% of popcorn are meeting the 5% trans fat limit. There has been great progress with crackers, instant noodles, frozen potatoes, pre-packaged desserts, and snack food. Lab analyses of bakery products indicate that only 43% of products analyzed are meeting the 5% trans fat limit.⁵ If significant progress is not shown, Health Canada plans on developing regulations to ensure the recommended trans fat levels are met. There is a strong interest from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada and numerous national food

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The new BC trans fat regulation restricts industrially produced trans fat in all foods stored, prepared, served, or offered for sale at food service establishments, including restaurants, delis, cafeterias, educational and health care institutions, schools, and bakeries.

coronary heart disease. In fact, trans fat may do even more harm than saturated fat because trans fat increases LDL cholesterol and decreases HDL cholesterol, whereas saturated fat raises both LDL and HDL cholesterol.¹ According to Stener and Dyerberg, "Gram for gram, trans fatty acids increase the risk for heart disease approximately 10 times more than saturated fatty acids."² Trans fats are responsible for an estimated 30 000 cardiac deaths every decade in Canada based on estimates from the Harvard School of Public Health data.³

Where will your patients find trans fats in their diet? Trans fat comes in two forms: naturally occurring in

in prepared foods like donuts, croissants, and other baked goods. A small amount of industrially produced trans fat is produced during commercial refinement of oils and prolonged deep fat frying. Studies show naturally occurring trans fat does not have the same harmful effect as industrially produced trans fat.

The new BC trans fat regulation restricts industrially produced trans fat in all foods stored, prepared, served, or offered for sale at food service establishments, including restaurants, delis, cafeterias, educational and health care institutions, schools, and bakeries. By doing so, the regulation reduces the risk of exposure to

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industry organizations to regulate the industrially produced trans fat content of the entire Canadian food supply chain, not just foods served in food service establishments.

The BC trans fat regulation comes into force on 30 September 2009. Environmental health officers will enforce the regulation as part of their routine food safety inspections.

In partnership with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon, a trans fat web site (www.restricttransfat.ca), print materials, and phone line through Dietitian Services at Health-Link BC (8-1-1) have been developed.

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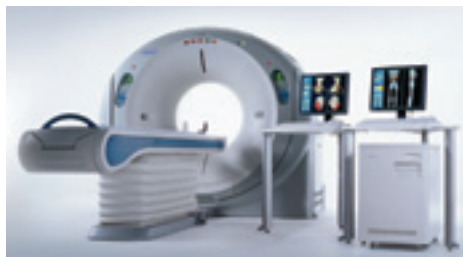
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