

Hydrogenated Fat

What is hydrogenated fat?

Hydrogenation is a way of making liquid vegetable oil hard at room temperature. The oil is heated up to 210 degrees C under high pressure for up to eight hours while hydrogen gas is injected. Small particles of nickel or copper are added. This destroys the essential fatty acids (needed for many important functions in the body) in the oil and replaces them with deformed trans fatty acids.

Why use hydrogenated fat?

Hydrogenation is the process used to make oils more solid and is the cornerstone of mass-produced margarine. It provides longer shelf life in baked products; longer fry-life for cooking oils, and gives foods a certain kind of texture. Processors use hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated fat because it is cheap, easy to work with and extends the life of processed foods. It is listed on food labels as hydrogenated fat, partially hydrogenated fat, vegetable fat and oils, vegetable margarine or vegetable shortening.

Why no hydrogenated fat at Planet Organic?

Hydrogenation converts unsaturated fatty acids into both saturated and trans-fatty acids. Saturated fats (butter, coconut and palm fat) are not good for the body in excess and should be kept to a minimum in the diet. The trans fatty acids formed by hydrogenation are *unnatural* and only ever exist in nature at very low levels, much lower than those found in hydrogenated fat. Because of this, we believe that the human body is not equipped to deal with them. They also compete with essential fatty acids (good for you) for absorption in the body.

Trans fats also cause significant and serious lowering of HDL (good) cholesterol and increases in LDL (bad) cholesterol; make the arteries more rigid; cause major clogging of arteries; cause insulin resistance; cause or contribute to type 2 diabetes; and cause or contribute to other serious health problems.

What are the alternatives?

Companies can use liquid vegetable oils or palm and coconut fat, which are naturally hard at room temperature.

Where we lead, others follow...

Within the last year several major retailers have finally made steps towards removing hydrogenated vegetable oil from their products. These include Tesco, who in November 2005 announced it had taken all trans fats out of its own label ready meals (450 in total), and Marks and Spencer who also announced in November that by mid 2006 all hydrogenated oils would be removed from their own brand products.