

High Levels of Industrially Produced Trans Fat in Popular Fast Foods

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THESE AUTHORS NOTE:

"The daily intake of about 5 g of trans fat is associated with a 25 percent increase in the risk of ischemic heart disease. For this reason, it is recommended that the consumption of trans fat be as low as possible."

"We determined the content of industrially produced trans fatty acids in 43 servings of fast foods bought in 20 countries between November 2004 and September 2005. The foods (chicken nuggets and french fries) were purchased from McDonald's and KFC outlets."

"The content of trans fatty acids varied from less than 1 g in Denmark and Germany to 10 g in New York (McDonald's) and 24 g in Hungary (KFC). Fifty percent of the 43 servings contained more than 5 g per serving — the amount of daily intake associated with a 25 percent increase in the risk of ischemic heart disease."

"The cooking oil used for french fries in McDonald's outlets in the United States and Peru contained 23 percent and 24 percent trans fatty acids, respectively, whereas the oils used for french fries in many European countries contained only about 10 percent trans fatty acids, with some countries as low as 5 percent (Spain) and 1 percent (Denmark)."

"At KFC, some values for trans fatty acid content were above 30 percent."

"Owing to the very high content of industrially produced trans fatty acids in certain fast foods, in many countries it is possible to consume 10 to 25 g of these trans fatty acids in one day and for habitual consumers of large amounts of this food to have an average daily intake far above 5 g."

COMMENTS FROM DAN MURPHY

Trans fats are very damaging to health. Various jurisdictions in the United States and other countries are legislating the reduction or elimination of trans fats in foods. This article reinforces the magnitude of the trans-fat problem in commercially available fast foods.