

## From Your Kitchen to Your Heart Trans Fats and You!

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Picture this: the mouthwatering scent of frying samosas wafting through the air, or the satisfying crunch of a perfectly baked biscuit. Sounds like a treat, right? But what if I told you that these beloved snacks are hiding a not-so-delicious secret? Yep, that's right-while you're savoring every bite, trans fats are busy plotting their attack on your heart, one artery at a time.

Yes, those seemingly innocent snacks might be harboring trans fats-one of the most dangerous ingredients you never knew you were consuming. These fats are like the culinary equivalent of a wolf in sheep's clothing: they look harmless, but they're far from it. As you enjoy that tasty bite, trans fats are working behind the scenes to clog your arteries and raise your risk of serious health issues.

Before you reach for that next treat, let's pull back the curtain on these hidden villains and see why it's time to give your kitchen—and your heart—a much-needed makeover.

Trans fats are a type of fat that naturally occur in small amounts in meat and dairy products. But the real problem comes from industrially produced trans fats, often found in processed foods.

These harmful fats are made through a process called hydrogenation, which turns liquid vegetable oils into solid fats. This makes them perfect for things like margarine, banaspati ghee, and many packaged snacks that need a long shelf life.

For example, think of the margarine you might spread on your toast, or the crispy biscuits you enjoy with tea. These products often contain industrial trans fats to keep them from spoiling quickly. But while they help make your food last longer, they can cause serious damage to your health, like clogging your arteries and increasing your risk of heart disease.

When you eat trans fats, they cause your bad cholesterol (LDL) to go up and your good cholesterol (HDL) to go down. This imbalance can clog your arteries, putting you at a higher risk for heart attacks and strokes. But that's not all—trans fats also lead to more inflammation in your body, which can contribute to serious health problems like type 2 diabetes and certain types of cancer, including prostate and colorectal cancer. For pregnant women, eating trans fats can even increase the chance of having underweight babies, which can bring on other health issues.

## The Situation in Pakistan: A Growing Concern

In Pakistan, trans fats are a big problem, largely because banaspati ghee—a popular cooking staple in many homes—is packed with these harmful fats. Add to that our love for fried and processed foods, and it's easy to see why so many Pakistanis are consuming more trans fats than they should.

For example, while the UK recommends that people eat no more than 5 grams of trans fats a day, it's common for many of us here to go well over that limit without even knowing it. While we can start protecting ourselves today, the real goal is to eliminate trans fats from our food. With Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) leading the way through their workshops and pushing for a ban on partially hydrogenated oils, there's hope that Pakistan will soon see stricter rules to get rid of these harmful fats. Their relentless efforts deserve our recognition and support.

But until those regulations kick in, it's up to us to stay informed and make the healthiest choices for ourselves and our families. By cutting down on trans fats, we're not just making a small change—we're taking a powerful step toward a healthier, trans fat-free future for Pakistan.

Thankfully, awareness is growing, and efforts to tackle this issue are picking up speed. A key player in this fight is the Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI). They're working hard to push for a full ban on partially hydrogenated oils (PHOs), which are the main source of these dangerous trans fats. CPDI is also holding workshops to educate people about the risks,

helping to spread the word about why cutting down on trans fats is so important. Their commitment to this cause is impressive and deserves our recognition.

To protect your health, start by checking food labels-if you spot “partially hydrogenated oils,” skip it. Swap out margarine and shortening for healthier options like olive or canola oil. Cut down on fried foods and processed snacks, or better yet, make them at home with healthier ingredients.

And don't keep this knowledge to yourself-spread the word about the dangers of trans fats to your family and community. The more we know, the stronger the push for change!