

# 3 Ways to Avoid Fat This Holiday Season

You've probably heard about the dangers of **saturated fat**, which is usually animal fat and solidifies at room temperature. Examples include butter, lard, meat fat, solid shortening and palm oil. You likely know this type of fat raises cholesterol, and very possibly you've trained yourself to stay away from it, even during the holidays.

But while you're staying away from saturated fats, you may fall into the trap of the trans fat that lurks in many kinds of holiday treats.

**Trans fat** (or trans fatty acid) is created in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid. Trans fat is found in many foods, but especially in fried foods, such as french fries and doughnuts, and baked goods, including pastries, pie crusts, biscuits, pizza dough, cookies, crackers, margarines and other shortenings.

Food manufacturers put trans fat in their foods because they're inexpensive to produce, easy to use and last a long time. Trans fat gives foods a pleasing taste and texture. Many restaurants and fast-food outlets use trans fat to deep-fry many of their dishes because oils with trans fat can be used many times over in commercial fryers.

You can find trans fat in processed and packaged foods by looking at the nutrition facts panel on the food labeling. You can also spot trans fat by reading ingredient lists and looking for ingredients referred to as "partially hydrogenated oils." Unfortunately, when they are used in restaurant cooking, you don't get a chance to look at the ingredient list. That's why if you are trying to eat healthy and/or lose

weight, cooking at home using whole foods—not those that are packaged or processed—is the best way to go.

## How to Stay Away From Trans Fats

The good news is that there are ways to keep your holiday **cooking** free from saturated fats and trans fat. Here are three tips:

**1. Turn to “good” fats.** There are fats that have actually been found to lower, not raise, the risk of **heart disease**. These fats contain the healthy fatty acid omega-3, which has been found to be cardio protective. When sautéing fish, for instance, olive oil or coconut oil are good choices for omega-3. To minimize oil content, buy the oils as sprays, or drip a little on a pan with a fork.

**2. Try plant-based eating for at least some meals during the holiday season.** One way to do this is to use meat substitutes, like toasted sandwiches made with portabello mushrooms or squares of grilled tofu and stuffed with vegetables. You’ll be reducing your overall meat consumption, which translates to less **fat**.

**3. Fast one day a week.** Studies find that groups that fast periodically have lower rates of heart disease, diabetes and cancer. They also live longer. In fact, a 25-year study of one group found the longest lifespan of any group ever recorded for that length of time, with better cholesterol markers. In my own life, I’ve fasted periodically, and I’ve lowered my weight and cholesterol as a result.

There are many different ways to **fast**. You can ease into it by not eating from dinner to the next morning, you can choose one day a week to fast, or you can adopt an approach where you lower your calorie intake on certain days, even though you are not foregoing food completely.

The holiday season shouldn’t be about how much food we can eat

or how many gifts we amass. The holidays are about celebrating together with family and giving thanks to God. This year, celebrate the season as healthy and lean as you went into it, and you'll find yourself looking forward to many happy holidays to come.

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