



Should the use of trans fats in foods be regulated?

GETTING ORIENTED

The weekly passage covers issues related to trans fats in foods. Here is some information that might be helpful to students less familiar with the topic.

American Diet

People are very concerned about the amount and type of food that most Americans eat. Over the last few decades, Americans are eating more foods that are produced in factories. Food companies can turn corn and soybeans into substances that are used to make many of the foods that we buy at supermarkets and restaurants. These foods might taste good, but they have a lot of fat and sugar. This diet is causing Americans to gain weight, and causing problems like heart disease because our bodies can't process these substances. People in many other countries eat foods that are not made in factories but come from the ground or animals.

People from these countries don't have as many health problems.



Cholesterol

The fats within the body that go through the blood stream are called lipids. The body produces a certain amount of these lipids on its own, but some of these fats travel through the body as a result of the food we eat. There are three types of lipids that are measured when the doctor tells you what your levels of cholesterol are.

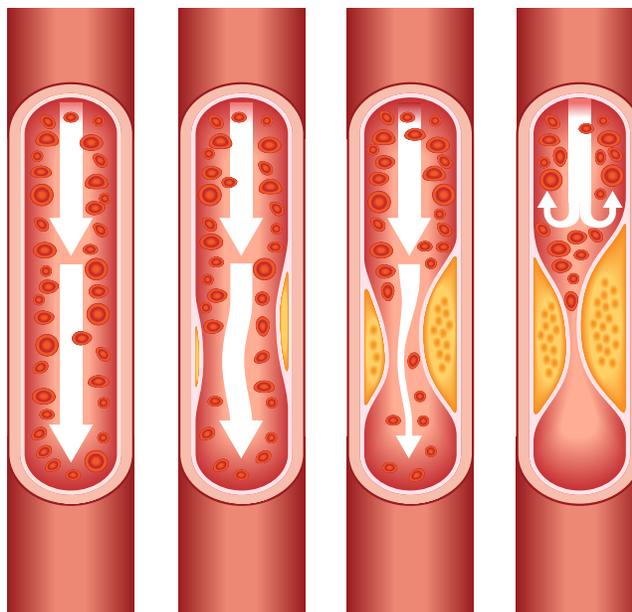
Above we have talked about LDL, which is the "bad" cholesterol, and HDL, which is the "good" cholesterol. There are also fats called triglycerides. Triglycerides are made in the liver, but they can also come from the food we eat. When a doctor takes blood samples from your body, one of the tests he/she does on the blood determines your levels of cholesterol. If your cholesterol levels are too high, you may be in danger of heart disease because these fats clog the arteries that carry your blood to all parts of your body.

History of Saturated and Unsaturated Fats



In the 1950s researchers discovered that vegetable oils could be used instead of animal fats in the production of such items as butter. Since animal fats are solid and vegetable oils are liquid, it was necessary to find a way to

make the oil solid. Thus came about the hydrogenation reaction. This is the process where unsaturated fatty acids are changed into saturated fatty acids by adding hydrogen to vegetable oil. Hence shortenings and margarines become solid or semi-solid. These are then called trans fats. Most of the trans fatty acids that are produced by the hydrogenation process are categorized as saturated fats because after the process, they tend to raise "bad" (LDL) cholesterol and lower "good" (HDL) cholesterol.





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EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

	<i>Some may have this view:</i>	<i>But others may think:</i>
Consumers	Many consumers really appreciate having the trans fats written out for them. They want to know exactly what they are buying. They would support the government banning or forbidding trans fats as has been done in other countries; if that happened, they wouldn't have to worry about looking at the labels all the time.	Many consumers want to eat whatever they want. Not everyone has problems with cholesterol so they want to eat things that taste good to them. They are opposed to or against the government interfering with the decisions of manufacturers. They are more concerned about everyone being responsible for themselves and keeping government out of the situation.
Manufacturers	Manufacturers want to continue to manufacture products that people will buy. They aren't worried about whether or not their products are the healthiest foods. They figure the people buying the products can look at the labels and make their own decisions. They don't mind being truthful and labeling their products, but they figure that, after that, consumers can make their own decisions.	Some manufacturers are more concerned about the health of the population in general. They want to make the healthiest product possible even if it doesn't taste as good as the old product that contains the trans fats. They may also feel that there will be more pressure on people to buy products without trans fats so they might as well mend or change their ways right now.
Government officials	Many government officials believe that banning the use of trans fats in food production will ultimately make for a healthier nation. They feel the pressure from other countries that have already banned the use of trans fats, and they don't want to feel like they are behind in this kind of a race. They think people will appreciate that they have researched this problem and made the healthy decisions.	Government officials who oppose the banning of trans fats are those who believe in less government. They cherish or deeply value the freedom of the American people even if their "free" decisions are not necessarily in the interest of them living the longest, healthiest lives. The government has lots of things that it wants to spend its money on (actually the money of tax payers). Some people in the government are against regulating or controlling trans fats because they feel that this is not a good use of the taxpayer money.



- As of January 1, 2006, food manufacturers have been required by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to list trans fats on food labels.
- The American Heart Association (AHA) suggests limiting saturated fat consumption to less than 7% of daily calories and trans fat consumption to less than 1%.
- Approximately 82 million people in the United States have some form of heart disease, causing about 2,200 deaths a day, averaging one death every 39 seconds.
- An estimated 98 million people are diagnosed with high cholesterol.
- Approximately 68% of American adults are overweight or obese and 32% of children ages 2 to 19 are overweight or obese.
- Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.
- Denmark decided in 2003 to ban trans fats, making it illegal for any food to contain more than 2 percent trans fats. Offenders face hefty fines and could be jailed.



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ANNOTATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Features of Academic Text: A Detached Stance

Word Generation articles are mostly expository in that they introduce a controversy and explain the positions of stakeholders on both sides of the issue.

A detached stance differentiates academic writing from informal writing. In the highlighted paragraph, the writer maintains the detached stance. A less academic version might say:

"They think people are capable of using their own judgment. I mean people should be able to just look at the food and know that it's not a good idea to eat a lot of it. Anyone knows that Oreos and M&M's are something you only eat once in a while. Why should I not get to eat them just because other people are too stupid to know to only eat them like once a week! I agree with the people who think like this."

The **odds** are high that you have eaten many foods with trans fats, a kind of oil, in the last few days. The use of trans fats is **widespread**. **Predominantly** found in fried and baked foods, such as French fries, doughnuts, cookies, pizza, and pastries, trans fats give these foods their delicious flavor and appealing texture. Manufacturers use trans fats because they help foods stay fresher longer. Researchers estimate that the average American consumes 5.8 grams of trans fats per day.

Trans fats are inexpensive to produce, so using them can lower the cost of producing food. But researchers say that people who eat foods with trans fats are more likely to have heart disease, strokes, and diabetes. The American Heart Association recommends we each limit the trans fats we consume to 2 grams per day. They say that the complete elimination of trans fats from the American diet would reduce heart disease by 10-20%.

In the U.S., big food chains like Starbucks and Wendy's have already stopped using trans fats. The city of New York passed a **regulation** banning trans fats from restaurants. Some countries, like Denmark, have banned trans

fats from all foods. Some people say the U.S. should ban all trans fats, too.

Others are against banning trans fats. They argue that it is the consumer's responsibility to decide what to eat and what to avoid eating. They think people are capable of using their own discretion. They say the government should compile data about trans fats to help educate consumers about this health issue, but let consumers make their own choices. People who are opposed to banning trans fats also point out that if people limit themselves to 2 grams per day, trans fats may not be a major health risk. Besides, these people say, Americans value freedom and their freedoms should include freedom to choose the treats you like.

What do you think? Should the government ban trans fats?



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GENERATING WORDS

Words With Multiple Meanings

Sometimes we have words in English that mean many different things. In your vocabulary this week, you have the word **odds**. In the text, **odds** means the probability or chance that something will happen or be so. For example, “The **odds** are high that you have eaten many foods with trans fats. . .” This means that it is probably true that you have eaten many foods with trans fats.

We most commonly use the word **odd** to say that a person is a little odd, or an idea is odd. In this use we mean that the person or the idea is a little apart from what we consider normal.

We also know the word in math class. An **odd number** is one that is not divisible by two.

If someone is wearing **odd socks**, he is wearing socks that don’t match.

There are also several English expressions using the word **odd** or **odds**.

Odd man out	The odd man out is the person left over when the others have been chosen for teams in a game. Sometimes that person is not allowed to play.
Odds and ends	This means miscellaneous leftovers - nothing particular. For example: The bag was full of odds and ends left over from a party. Maybe there were a few balloons, some paper hats, a bit of wrapping paper, etc.
Oddball	We use this when we are talking about a person who is a little crazy or has unusual behavior. It is usually not used in a mean way.

 With a partner, discuss these expressions and uses of the word and see if you can come up with some original sentences to help you understand the various meanings.



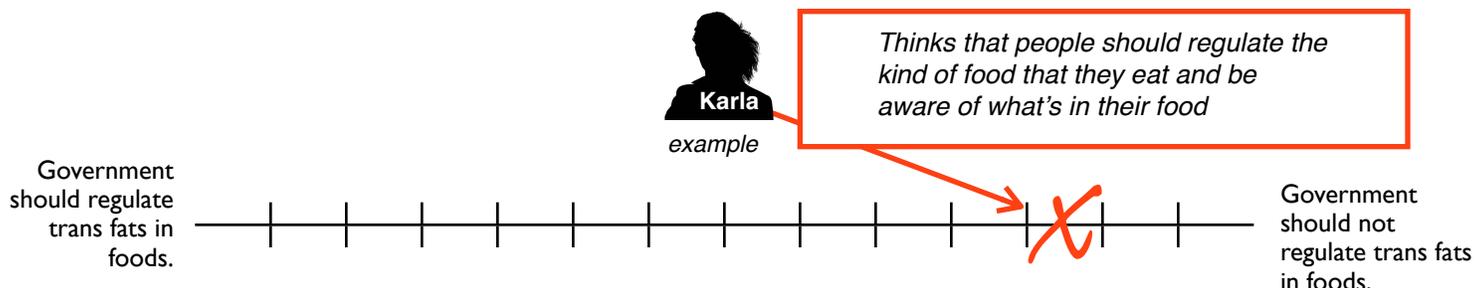
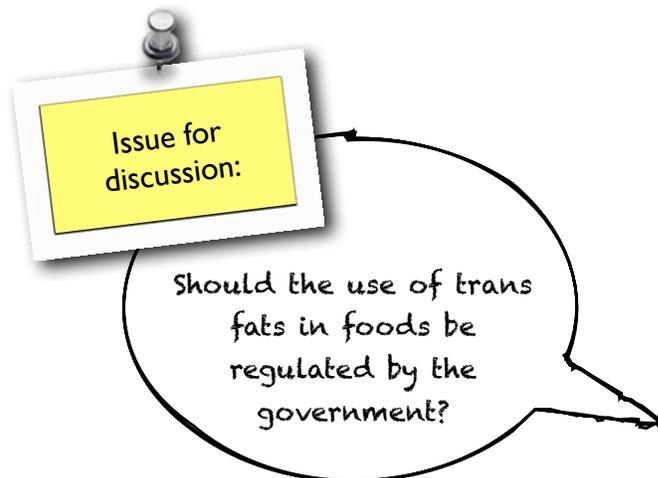
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DEVELOPING DISCUSSIONS

Opinion Continuum

Procedure:

1. Ask 3-4 of your classmates to place their name on the opinion continuum. Ask them to place and "X" on the continuum to represent where they stand on the issue for discussion and then write their name below the "X." Do not allow anyone to choose the middle.
2. Ask your classmates to explain why they placed their names where they did. You can ask them to elaborate if you don't understand. You might want to take a few notes under their names to remember the important reasons and evidence they use.
3. Be prepared to give your opinion to several of your classmates as well.



Class or small group discussion:

With a large or small group, share what you learned from talking to a few classmates.

Words and phrases you might use in today's discussion:

- Why do you think this?
- Can you give me an example?
- Can you use other words to explain that?
- Let me see if I understand correctly, are you saying that...
- _____ believes that _____. According to her, _____.

Notes: