

The Five Worst Foods

By

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Metabolic Typing is based on the unique perspective that, among foods that we would all agree are generally wholesome, there are some that are more or less appropriate for the different Metabolic Types. As Dr. Kristal likes to say: "There are good foods that are good for you, and good foods that are bad for you". This is a shorthand way of saying that not all generally wholesome foods are equally good for all people. However, there is an entire category of other foods that are universally bad for *everyone*, regardless of their Metabolic Type. Although many of us already know what they are, an occasional reminder never hurts!

1. Partially Hydrogenated Vegetable Oils /Trans Fatty Acids

Topping the list of the five worst foods are the partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. These are polyunsaturated or monounsaturated vegetable oils (such as soy, corn, sunflower, safflower, canola, peanut or cottonseed oil) that have been subjected to an industrial process designed to indefinitely extend their shelf life. In the process, however, the structure of their constituent fatty acids (the building blocks of oils and fats) have been irreparably damaged in such a way that they lose whatever nutritional value they had in the first place, and become extremely toxic in the body.

The process of partial hydrogenation — which uses high heat and such heavy metal catalysts as nickel and cadmium — is a form of artificial saturation that creates *trans* fatty acids, a type of fatty acid found almost nowhere in nature. Structurally, they resemble naturally saturated fatty acids, but with a crucial difference: their molecules have been rearranged (from the normal *cis* configuration to the unnatural *trans* configuration) so that they function completely differently in the body from a natural saturated fat. (Unfortunately, many mainstream dieticians and food scientists gloss over this crucial distinction, resulting in natural saturated fats being unfairly blamed for the evils of *trans* fatty acids).

So how bad *are* the partially hydrogenated vegetable oils and their *trans* fatty acids? Let me count the ways! They seriously disrupt the functioning of the all-important cell membranes (the "skin" that surrounds all the cells in our body), interfering with their ability to transport nutrients into the cell and let metabolic wastes out. This process, which is akin to "plasticizing" or gumming up the cell membranes, can lead to malnutrition and auto-intoxication at a cellular level, and can seriously disrupt the ability of the cells to produce energy. *Trans* fatty acids also speed up the process of insulin resistance, setting the stage for Type II diabetes, and irritate the inner lining of the arteries, contributing to cardiovascular disease, America's number one killer. They also interfere with the body's ability to properly utilize the all-important essential fatty acids (omega-3 and -6), seriously compromise the efficiency of the immune system, increase the size of fat cells (making them, and you, fatter!), reduce levels of the protective HDL cholesterol, raise levels of the potentially dangerous blood lipid lipoprotein (a), increase inflammation and blood clotting, and are even implicated in the development of cancer.

It's quite a list! Unfortunately, partially hydrogenated oils are found in most processed and fast foods (chicken nuggets, French fries, etc.), most commercial baked goods (chips, cookies, crackers, croissants, donuts, etc.), margarines, vegetable shortening, movie popcorn, American cheese, and peanut butter — in short, in most of the foods that line the shelves of our supermarkets! Please carefully read the labels on *all* packaged foods (even those in natural food stores, some of which also contain these oils) and do everything you can to avoid these toxic and extremely dangerous fats. They are the true villains of the fat wars, and have no place in a human body!

2. Soft Drinks / Sodas

Soft drinks and sodas are the epitome of an empty food, contributing only calories, but nothing of nutritional value. Worse, they supply either a huge dose of sugar (8-10 teaspoons per can!) or artificial sweeteners (like aspartame and acesulfame) that are linked to neurological problems (from headaches to seizures). Furthermore, they are loaded with phosphoric acid, an extremely acidic substance that very effectively flushes much-needed minerals (such as calcium, magnesium and zinc) out of the body. They are direct contributors to obesity, diabetes and osteoporosis, and, like *trans* fatty acids, have no redeeming qualities whatsoever!

3. Sugar (and High Fructose Corn Syrup)

You may be surprised to see it this low on the list, but sugar (mainly in the form of glucose) does play a legitimate role in energy production, and is not, therefore, inherently harmful. The real problems stem from extracting natural sugars from their food base (such as sucrose from sugar cane, or high fructose corn syrup from corn), thereby removing the very vitamins and minerals that sugar needs to be properly metabolized in the body. Sugar therefore depletes the body's own nutrient reserves, while contributing to weight gain, dental carries, blood sugar imbalances, and suppression of the immune system. Sugar (especially high fructose corn syrup, used widely in processed foods) tends to stick to proteins to form nonfunctional hybrid molecules (appropriately known as AGEs), which hasten the aging process and tissue destruction.

4. White Flour Products

Grains have been part of the food supply for about 10,000 years, but the refining of grains to make white flour products is relatively modern. Lost in the process are most of the B-vitamins, essential fatty acids, fiber and amino acids naturally found in whole grains, leaving behind the starch, which rapidly breaks down into glucose in the body, contributing to much the same problems as sugar, especially weight gain and blood sugar imbalances. If you are going to eat grains, eat them whole!

5. Excess Omega-6 Oils

Omega-6 fatty acids are essential for good health; but, if eaten in excess, they promote inflammation, heart disease and cancer. Whole foods provide plenty of them, so minimize such additional sources as canola and the polyunsaturated vegetable oils (corn, soy, sunflower and safflower). Use extra virgin olive oil (which primarily contains the omega-9 oleic acid) or coconut oil instead.