

# *Food For Thought*

## *Good Fat, Bad Fat, and Trans Fat: The Facts About Fat in Peanut Butter*

### **USDA Study Concludes Peanut Butter Should Be Labeled Zero Trans Fat**

Dr. Tim Sanders of USDA/ARS conducted a new trans fat study on peanut butter. Through an independent laboratory over 50 different samples of peanut butter were tested, including the major brands (like Skippy, Jif, and Smuckers), store brands, and natural brands of peanut butter. All of the samples tested contained less than 0.001 g of trans fat per serving (1 oz. or 2 tbsp.). Dr. Sanders notes, This means that under proposed FDA guidelines, the peanut butters we tested can be labeled zero grams trans fat. These results are consistent with an earlier study conducted at an independent laboratory for The Peanut Institute. This study revealed that the level of trans fat in 6 samples of commercial peanut butters is well below the proposed FDA cut-off of less than 0.5 grams for labeling a product as zero grams trans fat. <sup>1</sup>

#### **Nutrition Facts**

Serving Size 2 tbsp (32 g)		
Servings Per Container about 16		
Amount per Serving		
<b>Calories 190</b> <b>Calories from Fat 140</b>		
		% Daily Value*
Total Fat	16 g	25%
Saturated Fat**	3 g	15%
Monounsaturated Fat	8 g	
Polyunsaturated Fat	5 g	
Cholesterol	0 mg	0%
Sodium	149 mg	6%
Total Carbohydrate	12 g	4%
Dietary Fiber	2 g	8%
Sugars	3 g	
Protein	8 g	16%

Iron 2%                      Niacin 20%

\* % daily values based on a 2,000 calorie diet.  
\*\* Includes 0 g trans fat [proposed FDA trans labeling]

Ingredients: Roasted peanuts, sugar, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, salt.



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## *Facts and Myths About Peanut Butter, One of America's Favorite Foods*

Exciting new research shows the heart healthy benefits of monounsaturated fats found in peanuts and peanut butter. But there are still some questions about other types of fats in peanut butter.

**MYTH:** Peanut Butter is not heart healthy.

**FACT:** Peanut butter is indeed heart healthy. Over 80% of the fat in peanut butter is the unsaturated kind, which is heart healthy. Peanut butter, as with all plant foods, is naturally cholesterol-free. A study published in the December 1999 *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* by researchers from Penn State University showed that peanuts and peanut butter lowered blood cholesterol levels as effectively as olive oil in moderate fat diets. And the peanut butter diet was more effective than a low fat diet in maintaining HDL-cholesterol levels and lowering triglyceride levels. The study found the diet that included peanuts and peanut butter lowered cardiovascular disease risk by 21%, whereas the low-fat diet decreased the risk by only 12%. Peanut butter is also a good source of niacin, folic acid, phosphorous, vitamin E, and phytosterols.

**MYTH:** Peanut Butter should be avoided because it is high in trans fats.

**FACT:** NO! Based on the newly proposed FDA regulations about trans fat labeling, peanut butter would declare ZERO (0) trans fat. Independent analyses of peanut butters by USDA and by The Peanut Institute have shown extremely low levels of trans fat. Some peanut butter contains a very small amount of partially hydrogenated vegetable oil to help prevent oil separation, which is preferable to most consumers. These oils contribute an insignificant amount of trans fat.

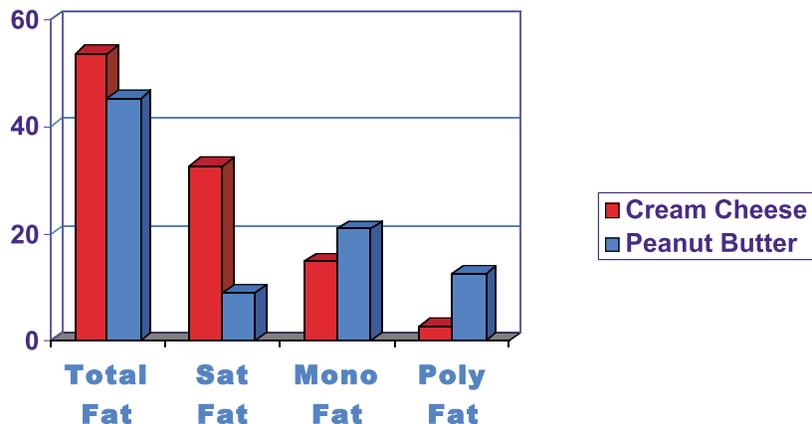
**MYTH:** There is a huge difference between regular peanut butter and natural peanut butter.

**FACT:** NO! Peanut butter today is remarkably like that made 100 years ago. All peanut butter, by law, must contain a minimum of 90% peanuts. Both natural and regular peanut butters may contain some sugar and salt for flavoring. Some brands also contain a small amount of stabilizer (partially hydrogenated vegetable oil) to keep the oil from separating, which most consumers prefer. This also helps maintain peanut butter freshness.



### Bagel Options

4 Tbsps. cream cheese  
on a bagel  
versus  
2 Tbsps. peanut butter  
on a bagel,  
%kcal



## Definitions of Types of Fats

**Good fats, bad fats good cholesterol, bad cholesterol** It all gets very confusing very quickly. Here are some key words and definitions that help explain fats in foods and lipids in your blood. <sup>2, 3</sup>

### FATS IN FOODS

**Monounsaturated fat** is missing one (mono) hydrogen on its chemical chain and is liquid at room temperature. Monounsaturated fat is found in plant foods like peanuts and peanut butter; vegetable oils like peanut, olive and canola oil; and avocados. There is no set Daily Reference Value (DRV) for monounsaturated fat. Monounsaturated fat has been shown to lower total and LDL cholesterol, while maintaining beneficial HDL cholesterol.

**Polyunsaturated fat** is missing more than one (poly) hydrogen on its chemical chain and is also liquid at room temperature. It is found in plant foods like corn oil and soy oil and in fatty fish such as salmon and mackerel. There is no set DRV for polyunsaturated fat. Polyunsaturated fat also lowers total and LDL cholesterol, but may not have the same beneficial effect on HDL (good) cholesterol.

**Saturated fat** has all of the hydrogen that it can hold on its chemical chain (it is saturated) and is firm at room temperature. It is found mainly in animal products like butter, meat, milk and cheese. The DRV for saturated fat is 20 g or 10% of calories. Saturated fat is called the "bad" fat because it has been shown to increase total and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels.

**Trans fat** results from adding hydrogen to unsaturated vegetable oils to increase shelf life and to improve texture. The hydrogen is added and crosses (trans) the chemical chain, making the fat more solid at room temperature. Trans fats are found in foods like cookies, crackers, some margarines, baked goods and fried foods. They are also naturally occurring in very small amounts in meat and dairy products. Trans fats tend to increase total and LDL cholesterol, and also may decrease HDL (good) cholesterol.

**Cholesterol** is a fat compound found only in some animal foods like meats, eggs, and full-fat dairy products. Because they are a plant food, peanuts and peanut butter are naturally cholesterol-free.

### LIPIDS IN YOUR BLOOD

**Total cholesterol** is a measure of both HDL (good) and LDL (bad) cholesterol in the blood. In the past, health professionals used this number to estimate cardiovascular health. Now scientists know that looking at HDL and LDL separately, as well as looking at triglyceride levels in the blood, gives a more accurate picture of cardiovascular health.

**HDL (high-density lipoprotein) cholesterol** is the "good" blood cholesterol, composed mostly of protein. HDL transports cholesterol in your blood back to the liver to get rid of it. Higher levels of HDL (High=HDL is a good way to remember it) are associated with heart health.

**LDL (low-density lipoprotein) cholesterol** is the "bad" cholesterol, composed mainly of fat. You want low levels of LDL circulating in your blood (Low=LDL). LDL cholesterol is associated with an increased risk for cardiovascular disease.

**Triglyceride level (TG)** is a measure of the amount of circulating fat in the blood. TG is an emerging risk factor for heart disease. A high level of triglyceride, or a lot of fat circulating in the blood, is associated with an increase risk for cardiovascular disease.

New studies are showing that while low fat diets lower total and LDL cholesterol, they actually raise triglyceride levels and lower the good HDL cholesterol. A diet higher in good monounsaturated fat also lowers total and LDL cholesterol but will not increase triglyceride levels and maintains the good HDL cholesterol. <sup>4-5</sup> Thus including foods high in monounsaturated fats, like peanuts and peanut butter, helps maintain heart health.

References:

1. Direct Communication with Dr. Tim Sanders. June 2000.
2. *American Dietetic Association's Complete Food and Nutrition Guide*. Duyff, RL. 1996.
3. *Understanding Nutrition, Seventh Edition*. Whitney, EN and Rolfes, SR. 1996.
4. Kris-Etherton, PM et al. High-monounsaturated fatty acid diets lower both plasma cholesterol and triacylglycerol concentrations. *AJCN* 1999; 70:1009-15.
5. Kris-Etherton, PM for the AHA Nutrition Committee. AHA Science Advisory: Monounsaturated Fatty Acids and Risk of Cardiovascular Disease. *Circulation*, September 14, 1999.

*The Peanut Institute is a non-profit organization that supports nutrition research and develops educational programs to encourage healthful lifestyles.*

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