



For Immediate Release

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**Trans Fat is Undetectable in Peanut Butter, says USDA Study
*FDA will soon announce trans fat labeling regulations***

Albany, GA, July 3, 2003 -- Peanut butter is an exception to the general rule that says if partially hydrogenated oil is present in the ingredient list, the product contains trans fat. Research from U.S. Department of Agriculture/Agricultural Research Service (USDA/ARS) shows that both natural and commercial peanut butters, including all major brand names, contain an undetectable amount of trans fat. The study, "Non-detectable Levels of *trans*-Fatty Acids in Peanut Butter," was conducted by Dr. Tim Sanders and concludes that there is no reason to promote natural brands of peanut butter over commercial brands based on the trans fat content.¹

This study shows that when it comes to peanut butter, the ingredient list is not a good indication of the healthful fat profile. This is about to change, according to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), as they prepare to announce mandatory trans fat labeling for food manufacturers. It is expected that under new FDA guidelines, peanut butter would declare zero grams trans fat on its label.

Trans fats have come under fire over the past decade because like saturated fats, they raise total and bad low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol. In addition, trans fats lower good high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol, which is needed to carry the bad cholesterol out of the body. Earlier this week, FDA commissioner Mark McClellan addressed health professionals and the food industry and urged them to do more to warn Americans about the consequences of unhealthy diets. He said, "Considerable recent research, including controlled feeding and epidemiologic studies, has provided pretty good evidence that replacing saturated and trans fats with mono- and poly-unsaturated fats can significantly reduce important health risks. According to some studies, this substitution can potentially reduce the risk of heart disease by up to 30 to 40 percent." McClellan emphasized the need to relay this kind of information to consumers through better nutrition labeling guidelines, including mandating trans fat labeling in the very near future. 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 (hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oil), of which about 60% is stearic acid, a saturated fat that has a neutral effect on blood cholesterol levels. Stabilizer is added to peanut butter to keep the oil from separating and to help maintain peanut butter freshness.

Nutrition Research Shows Eating a Small Amount of Peanut Butter and Peanuts Everyday Reduces Chronic Disease Risk

A recent paper from researchers at Harvard School of Public Health shows that eating one tablespoon of peanut butter or one ounce of peanuts or nuts five or more times per week can

reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes by 21% and 27%, respectively. The study was published in *Journal of the American Medical Association* in November 2002.²

In a controlled clinical trial, researchers at Pennsylvania State University found that a moderate-fat diet with peanuts and peanut butter reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease by 21%, whereas a low fat diet reduced the risk by only 12%, compared to the average American diet.³ These data are consistent with large population studies from Harvard and Loma Linda Universities that show that eating five or more servings of peanut butter, nuts and peanuts can reduce the risk of heart disease by as much as 50%.

Over 75% of the fat in peanut butter is the unsaturated, heart-healthy kind, and as with all plant foods, peanut butter contains no cholesterol. Peanut butter is a good source of niacin, folic acid, phosphorous, and vitamin E. Peanut products also contain significant amounts of phytosterols thought to protect against heart disease and cancer.

1. Sanders, T.H. Non Detectable Levels of Trans-Fatty Acids in Peanut Butter. *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*. 2001;49:2349-51.
2. Jiang, R, Manson, JE, Stampfer, MJ, Liu, S, Willett, WC, Hu, FB. Nut and peanut butter consumption and risk of type 2 diabetes in women. *JAMA*. 2002;288(2):2554-2560
3. Kris-Etherton P.M. et al. High-monounsaturated fatty acid diets lower both plasma cholesterol and triacylglycerol concentrations. *AJCN*. 1999;70:1009-15.

The Peanut Institute is a non-profit organization that supports nutrition research and develops educational programs to encourage healthful lifestyles. Learn more about peanuts and health at www.peanut-institute.org

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