

HEALTH ADVISORY # 11

Voluntary Artificial Trans Fat Reduction (ATFR) Program

Artificial trans fats are produced through an industrial process (referred to as hydrogenation) that converts vegetable oils into semisolid fats. These fats are often found in margarines, shortenings, baked goods, fried foods, and snack foods.

There is strong evidence that the consumption of trans fats increases the risk of coronary heart disease, the leading cause of death and premature death in the Los Angeles County (LAC) population. This risk appears to be greater than with other dietary fats, even saturated fats. Trans fats increase the level of bad cholesterol and decrease the level of good cholesterol. Trans fats also increase the level of triglycerides, cause inflammation within the blood vessels, and irritate the internal lining of blood vessels, all of which may further increase heart disease risk.

In consideration of these and other factors, LAC Public Health, in partnership with various public health and food service industry stakeholders, developed the Voluntary ATFR Program to help consumers identify healthier dining options.

As a food facility operator, you may have questions about participating in the Voluntary ATFR Program. To assist you, the following are answers to several frequently asked questions:

Q: What is the voluntary ATFR Program?

A: The ATFR Program recognizes food facilities that do not store, use, or serve food containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, shortening, or margarines with 0.5 grams or more trans fat per serving except food that is being served directly to patrons in a manufacturer's original sealed package. (Foods with trans fat values of less than 0.5 grams per serving are listed as zero grams of trans fat).

Food facilities that meet this standard are recognized with the issuance of an official ATFR Program decal/placard to notify consumers that they serve zero grams of artificial trans fat.

Q: Will my grade be affected if I don't participate in the ATFR Program?

A: Participation in the ATFR Program is strictly voluntary. Your food facility's letter grade will not be affected if you choose not to participate in the program.

Q: What are the benefits of participating in the ATFR Program?

A: As a participant in the ATFR Program, you will receive an official ATFR Program decal/placard. The decal/placard will distinguish your food facility from the competition and serve to inform prospective customers that you recognize their desire to have healthy dining options. Additionally, your food facility will be listed on the LAC Public Health website as an active participant in the ATFR Program.

Q: How do I join the ATFR Program?

A: To participate in the ATFR Program you must submit an application to LAC Environmental Health for review and approval. Applications are available at your local Environmental Health district office and online at www.lapublichealth.org/eh.

Q: Is there a fee to participate in the ATFR Program?

A: A fee of \$204.00 is required to participate in the ATFR Program and must be submitted with your completed application.

Q: Do food facility chains have to submit multiple applications and fees?

A: Food facility chains only have to submit one application for all locations if all of the following conditions are met:

1. Each location shares common ownership.
2. Each location conducts food service operations consistent with the food facility chain's operational model.
3. Foods received, prepared, and offered for sale at each location are the same for each location throughout the chain.

Food facility chains that meet the above conditions are required to submit only one application fee of \$136.00 plus \$68.00 *for each participating location in the food facility chain.*

Q: Will I receive a separate ATFR Program inspection?

A: Yes. As long as you are an active participant in the program your food facility will receive an ATFR inspection once annually to assure compliance with the program standards. A separate inspection report form will be used for the ATFR inspection. There is no additional fee for the inspections.

Q: Will my grade be affected if my food facility is out of compliance with the ATFR Program standards?

A: Posting the official ATFR Program decal/placard bears the same responsibility to accuracy as any other advertising claim to your menu (e.g. "fresh" halibut, versus "fresh frozen" halibut). Therefore, if you participate in the program and post the decal/placard, non-compliance with the program's standards may result in a debit in points if observed during the course of a routine food facility inspection.

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