

Mexican lawmakers ban use of trans fats, which cause 13,000 deaths a year in the country

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Mexico's Parliament has banned the use of trans fats, a common ingredient in processed foods and a major cause of cardiovascular disease and stroke in the country and worldwide.

Trans fats are responsible for 540,000 deaths worldwide annually. They are the worst kind of fat, and have no known health benefits. Found in items such as baked goods, —cakes, cookies, pies, etc. — shortening, microwave popcorn, and frozen pizza, trans fats are also known as industrially-produced trans fatty acid (iTFA) or partially hydrogenated oil (PHO), which you may see on the ingredients list of the foods you buy.

Advocates worked for years to prohibit trans fats

NCD Alliance through its Partnership with [Resolve To Save Lives \(RTSL\)](#) [1] supported work of the Mexico Saludable Coalition in engaging the NCD community to successfully advocate for TFA elimination.

The substance is responsible for more than 13,000 deaths yearly in Mexico, and health activists have been working toward their elimination for years. The Senate voted unanimously to eliminate trans fats in October 2021, followed by the 10 February unanimous decision in the Chamber of Deputies. The President is expected to sign the law within two months, while implementation could take six months.

“This is an important advance for Mexico since this measure contributes to prevent cardiovascular diseases, which are the biggest cause of mortality,” said Erick Antonio Ochoa, director of Salud Justa Mx, a civil society organization that has led advocacy against trans fats, and Co-coordinator of the Mexico Saludable Coalition.

[In a media release](#) [2] he added that Mexico's major trading partners, the United States and Canada, previously banned use of the substance. In the region, Chile, Uruguay, Peru, Brazil and Argentina have also acted to eliminate the use of trans fats.

“Mexico celebrates a vital public health win with the passing of a bill that will see industrial trans fats removed from the food supply,” said NCD Alliance CEO Katie Dain. “Trans fats are a silent killer, and their elimination will save thousands of lives every year.”

The article approved on 10 February, in Mexico’s General Health Law, actually prohibits the use of partially hydrogenated oils and limits use of iTFAs to 2 g out of 100 g.

Two WHO best practices

[According to the World Health Organization \(WHO\), Mexico’s restriction is one of two best-practice policy alternatives](#) [3]. The other is a national ban on the production or use of PHO. The agency says that to date, 40-plus countries have implemented one of the two measures. “The results are clear. In Denmark, the first country to eliminate trans fats in 2004, studies show that there has been a decrease in mortality from heart disease.”

High intake of trans fats increases the risk of death from any cause by 34% and [from coronary heart disease by 28%](#) [4]. For every 1% increase in daily energy obtained from trans fats, coronary heart disease mortality raises by 12%. Trans fats intake has also been associated with an increased risk for other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and related conditions such as ovarian cancer, infertility, endometriosis, Alzheimer’s disease, diabetes and obesity.

The WHO has called for global elimination of industrial trans fat by 2023 via the REPLACE initiative.

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[ultra-processed food](#) [6]

[cardiovascular disease](#) [7]

[stroke](#) [8]

[unhealthy diets](#) [9]

[nutrition](#) [10]

[diabetes](#) [11]

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[3] <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/4153266/tedros-adhanom-ghebreyesus/food-should-be-source-health-not-cause-disease>

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