

Acrylamide

The Food Advisory Consumer Service (FACS) shares the concern over earlier research findings which indicated varying amounts and potential health risk of acrylamide in 40% of the food supply, whether home cooked, restaurant prepared or manufactured. Acrylamide is formed during the frying, roasting and baking of (especially starch based) foods, generally at temperatures above 120 degrees centigrade.

The Codex Alimentarius Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) concluded in a report (March 2005) that more work is needed to quantify the risk from acrylamide in food, but that efforts by especially food processors to reduce acrylamide content in foods should continue. Codex Alimentarius is the World Food Standards Authority administered jointly by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. WHO has recommended that the acrylamide health risk be reassessed when the results of ongoing studies become available. At such time Codex will also be in a better position to set standards for acrylamide.

In the meantime the WHO has advised that people do not need to change their diet or alter the way in which they cook their food and should continue to consume a healthy and balanced diet.

The FACS message

FACS supports the JECFA recommendation for continued studies. While it is not possible to issue recommendations on how much acrylamide containing foods are safe to eat, the latest information reinforces general advice on healthy eating: eat a balanced, varied diet rich in fruit and vegetables and eat fried, fatty, braaied, char-grilled and fermented foods in moderation.

FACS Scientific Director 2009.