



## The Offenders

If you can think of the foods on the POWER foods list as the good guys, then these three are the bad, in fact they are just plain ugly. What's more, these three amigos like to travel together, you'll often find more than one of them in the same processed food product. Once you start to read food labels, you'll realize just how common they are in a wide range of foods we eat. By themselves they add nothing in the way of nutritional value, only empty calories in the form of fat and sugar. It's easy to see why their over-consumption is linked to the rise in obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes in our society. The three "most wanted" are:

- **Refined Wheat Flour** - Found in many packaged foods including bread, bagels, pastas, pretzels, crackers, and other snack type foods. Utterly devoid of fiber and nutrients, this type of flour is processed so much that it then has to be enriched with vitamins and minerals. Your body will assimilate these concentrated calories very quickly and it's similar to eating table sugar by the spoonful. Many well known and respected nutritionists believe over-consumption of refined wheat flour is one of the reasons why the rate of obesity is on the rise.
- **Trans-Fatty Acids and Hydrogenated Oils** - From products such as mayonnaise, many commercial peanut butters, margarines, salad dressings, and baked goods (to name just a few). The process of hydrogenation gives the product a longer shelf life although your body doesn't deal well with it. Why? Because they are artificial, man-made products and not occurring naturally. In fact, your body will treat them as if they were **saturated** fats. Hopefully by now we all know what excess consumption of saturated fats does for our hearts and vascular systems.
- **High Fructose Corn Syrup** - This is also very common in a wide range of processed foods and beverages, particularly in many so called "natural" juice products aimed at children. Fructose is a naturally occurring sugar found in small quantities in fruit and in that form doesn't pose a health risk. The refined syrup, on the other hand, is a very concentrated source of simple sugar. Not only does this add a lot of extra calories, the sudden surge of insulin necessary to deal with all that sugar is hard on our vascular system. Over time this may be a factor contributing to cardiovascular disease and diabete

So what should we do? Awareness is always the first step and that means getting used to reading the labels on any packaged foods that you eat. If you aren't sure what is in your foods, try checking the internet, you can run a search for any of the above ingredients and you will pull up a wealth of information. You will find it difficult to avoid these three products at most grocery store chains. Health conscious stores such as Trader Joe's and Wild Oats have a much larger selection of products without these ingredients (not all of them however, you still need to read the labels). The bottom line is none of these ingredients are necessary or desirable to maintain optimal health and it's in our best interests to reduce their intake as much as possible!