

# Cut the carcinogen in your french fries

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is issuing guidance to the food industry on how to reduce levels of acrylamide - a chemical that forms in foods cooked at high heat, such as french fries and potato chips.

"Acrylamide is a chemical formed when an amino acid (asparagine) reacts with sugar," says Dr. Donald Hensrud, medical director of the Mayo Clinic Healthy Living Program. " It's been demonstrated as causing cancer in animals and is classified as 'reasonably anticipated to be a carcinogen in humans' (as opposed to proven carcinogens, such as asbestos)."

He continues, "It is difficult to know exactly what safe levels are in the food supply or in our bodies, so the FDA is taking the approach of providing guidelines to the [food industry](#) to voluntarily do what they can to decrease [acrylamide](#). This involves things, such as not heating food to extremely high temperatures, choosing varieties of potatoes that are low in acrylamide and other methods."

Hensrud recommends that consumers follow a healthy eating plan consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which may help to keep acrylamide levels low.

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