

## What is in a Frankfurter?

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Frankfurters are on your shopping list. With the assortment of frankfurter products currently available at most grocery stores, how do you determine which kind to select for your household? Some of these choices include frankfurters made from beef, pork, chicken or turkey, and they may be 97% fat-free or low sodium products.

The "traditional" frankfurter, also known as a hot dog, is a pre-cooked, finely chopped sausage. It may contain up to 30 percent fat which is the maximum amount allowed by government regulations. Fat provides a frankfurter with flavor, texture and juiciness. If the fat content is reduced from 30 percent to 3 percent to make a low-fat product, other ingredients must be added to provide the characteristic flavor and juiciness associated with a frankfurter. This is often done by adding water and extra seasonings to a formulation. To hold the added water in the frankfurter, ingredients such as hydrolyzed vegetable or milk protein may be used. Otherwise, water would seep out of the frankfurter and leave fluid in the frankfurter package.

If a frankfurter is labeled as a "beef frankfurter," beef skeletal meat and beef fat must be used as the meat source to make this product. Combinations of beef, pork, chicken and turkey are commonly used to manufacture frankfurters. A product labeled "beef and turkey frankfurter" indicates that over one-half of the meat used to make this product was beef, and at least 15 percent of the meat was turkey. These guidelines allow processors some flexibility in the amount of beef and turkey used to make this combination.

If "turkey frankfurter-beef added" or "turkey frankfurter-with beef" is on the label, over one-half of the meat used to make this product was turkey, and 20 percent or less was beef. If more than 20 percent beef was used in this combination, the label would state "turkey and beef frankfurter" or "frankfurter made from turkey and beef."

One common misconception is that all frankfurters contain meat by-products. Only frankfurters labeled with the phrase "with by-products" or "with variety meats" may contain meat by-products.

New government labeling regulations were released in January 1993 that specify definitions for terms such as low-fat and low-sodium. These regulations become effective in July 1994 for meat products. In general, low-fat frankfurters will not be allowed to contain more than 3 g fat per serving, while low-sodium frankfurters will be limited to a maximum of 140 mg sodium per serving.