

Fat Facts

It's time to separate fat facts from fiction so you can make the best choices for yourself. Different types of fats have different effects on your health.

Saturated Fat: Found in animal products including meat and meat products, dairy products, lard and butter. Tropical oils like palm, palm kernel and coconut oils are also saturated and can be found in candy, snack products and movie popcorn. Saturated fat is typically solid at room temperature. Saturated fats raise cholesterol levels, which increases the risk of heart disease. Therefore, it's recommended that no more than 10 percent of your total daily calories come from saturated fats.

An easy way to remember this is:

Saturated fats are Solid at room temperature and Sit in your arteries.

Unsaturated Fat: Unsaturated fat is liquid at room temperature. It typically comes from plants and fish.

- Polyunsaturated fat is a healthier alternative to saturated fat because it decreases total cholesterol. It is primarily found in these oils: safflower, sunflower, corn, sesame seed, flaxseed, soybean and cottonseed. Fish is also an excellent source.
- Monounsaturated fat helps lower cholesterol when eaten in place of saturated fat. Good sources include canola oil, olive oil and peanut oil. A helpful way to remember these is Good COP (Canola, Olive, Peanut). Avocado, nuts, olives and peanut butter also contain monounsaturated fats.

Trans Fat: A fourth type of fat, called trans fat, is a result of man-made processes that turn healthier liquid vegetable oils into a less healthy solid fat that raises the risk of heart disease. They may be found in margarine, shortening, chips, snack foods, crackers, baked goods and fried foods.

Four Ways to Make Your Fat Intake Healthier

1. Decrease your intake of saturated fat.

- Choose liquid fat instead of solid fat whenever possible.
- Remove the skin from chicken before cooking.
- Choose ground beef labeled lean and drain excess fat after cooking.
- Look for lean cuts of beef; these often have the words round or loin in the name.
- Trim the visible fat from meat, pork and chicken before cooking.
- Experiment with vegetable sources of protein like beans and soy.
- Use low- or non-fat (skim) versions of your favorite dairy products.
- Grate and sprinkle small amounts cheese for flavor rather than using large chunks.
- Limit snack foods made with tropical oils.

2. Use healthier unsaturated fats.

- Buy or make salad dressings with vegetable, olive or canola oil.
- Use unsaturated oils in place of butter or lard when cooking.
- Thinly spread avocado or guacamole instead of mayonnaise or butter on a sandwich.
- Olives add a flavorful healthy dose of fat to pastas, salads and other dishes.

- Peanut butter is an old standby; high in fat but satisfying in small amounts.
- Tree nuts like almonds and walnuts have additional health benefits. They are a filling snack and add nice flavor to pasta dishes, salads and stuffing.
- Try to eat at least two servings of fish each week. (If you have a history of coronary heart disease, the American Heart Association recommends one serving of fish daily).



Balance, Variety and Moderation.

By balancing your intake of higher fat foods with lower fat foods in the same meal or throughout the day, it's possible to stay within the total daily healthy fat guidelines while still enjoying flavorful foods. Eat a variety of foods that use healthy oils and try a variety of preparation methods. Learn to enjoy fat in moderation instead of all or nothing.

3. Watch trans fats.

- Look for trans fat on the Nutrition Facts label — especially in snack foods, baked goods and fried foods.
- Ask whether your favorite restaurants use trans fat for cooking or baking.

4. Reduce total fat intake.

- Prepare or order foods that are grilled, roasted, baked, boiled or braised instead of fried or sautéed to boost your health without sacrificing flavor.
- Use less butter, oil, mayonnaise, cream cheese and other condiments.
- Use less than the usual amount of salad dressing, sauces and toppings.
- Ask for your salad dressing and sauces on the side. Dip the tip of the tines of your fork in the dressing before you spear your salad for a little flavor with every bite.
- Spray your pans with cooking spray instead of coating them with fats and oils.
- Use less fat than a recipe calls for. For baking substitute applesauce or pureed prunes.
- Try lower fat versions of your favorite foods. Be sure to read the label though; low fat doesn't necessarily mean low calorie.

My ideas for improving my fat intake:

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