

Facts about Fats and Cholesterol

Fats have a place in your diet

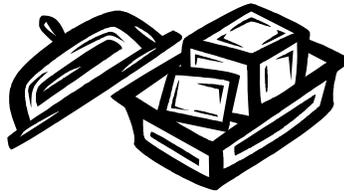
Fats and oils provide flavor to your food, make you feel full after meals, and provide your body with energy, fatty acids, and vitamin E. You need fat in your diet for good health, but it is important to eat the right type and amount of fat to keep your heart healthy.

Too many fats are not healthy

Eating high fat foods from fast food and convenience foods multiple times a week and high-fat snacks between meals may contribute to excess body weight and high blood cholesterol levels. Everyone 20 years of age and older should get their blood cholesterol levels checked every five years to find out if they are in a healthy range. Test more often if levels are high/elevated. To help control your blood cholesterol, keep the total percentage of fats in your diet (saturated and unsaturated) to less than 35% of your total calories (approximately 65 grams or less of all fats).

Saturated fats

Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature and can be found in fatty meats, the skin and fat on poultry, high fat dairy products (cheese, whole milk, cream, butter, and ice cream), palm oil, coconut oil, and lard. Try to limit the amount of saturated fat to 7% of your total daily calories (approximately 20 grams or less).



Cholesterol in foods

Cholesterol is found in animal foods such as meat, poultry, fish, dairy products, and egg yolks. Plant foods do not have cholesterol. Cholesterol is important for the production of hormones and brain and nerve tissues. Our bodies can make all of the cholesterol we need, so it is not necessary to consume cholesterol.

Know how. Know **now**.

Unsaturated fats

Unsaturated fats tend to be liquid at room temperature. They include polyunsaturated fats that are found in vegetable oils (corn oil and safflower oil), nuts, and some margarines.

Unsaturated fats also include monounsaturated fats that are found in olives, olive oil, avocados, and canola oil. Oils come from many different plants and from fish. They are sources of good fats and provide essential nutrients. Margarine is made from vegetable oils and goes through a process that results in a type of fat that acts like saturated fat, known as trans fat. The best margarine choices are those made from corn or safflower oils.

Trans fats

Trans fats, often called “partially hydrogenated” on food labels, are made by chemically altering oils so they stay solid at room temperature. They are just as likely as saturated fats to raise your risk for heart disease. They tend to raise LDL cholesterol (the “bad” cholesterol) and lower HDL cholesterol (the “good” cholesterol) in your blood. *Trans* fats can be found in stick margarine and shortening, and are used in many snack foods, cookies, and ready-made fried foods. Keep *trans* fats as low as possible in your diet.



Choosing the right foods

- Use MyPlate to help you make healthy food choices.
- Eating foods that are naturally low in fat, like foods from plants (grains, fruits, and vegetables), is a great way to eat right and light.
- Limit your intake of high-fat, processed meats, such as bacon, sausages, salami, bologna, and other cold cuts. Try the lower fat versions, such as sliced turkey or chicken.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat milk, fat-free or low-fat yogurt, and low-fat cheese most of the time.