

Eat well, live better:

What is Fat?



Fat is essential for our health. Fat helps our bodies absorb fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K) and minerals, but it is key to keep portions in mind. Although fat is beneficial for our health, high fat foods are higher in calories than protein or carbohydrate rich foods. It is important to know and understand the different types of fats: saturated, trans and unsaturated to protect your heart.

Healthy fats

Healthy fats are essential for your heart, supports high-density lipoprotein (HDL) or good cholesterol, and your overall health.

The Goal:

Choose more of the healthier fats and eat fewer unhealthy fats.

Monounsaturated Fats

Monounsaturated fats are found in foods like olives and avocados. They are known for their ability to improve heart health by reducing low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or bad cholesterol and increasing HDL.

Polyunsaturated Fats

Polyunsaturated fats are also healthy fats found in certain vegetable oils, nuts, seeds, and soybean products. They are essential for various functions in your body, like cell structure and hormone production. It is best to focus on getting more monounsaturated fats for heart health while still including polyunsaturated fats in your diet for overall well-being.

Omega-3 Fats

Omega-3 fatty acids support vital functions in your body. Your body can't produce enough omega-3s, meaning you need to get them from the foods you eat. Find them in certain fish like salmon, sardines, herring, albacore tuna, mackerel, and rainbow trout. Walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseeds, and canola oil are also significant sources of omega-3 fats.

Unhealthy fats

Unhealthy fats can increase LDL, clog arteries, and make it harder for our hearts to work properly.

The Goal:

Improve your cholesterol, heart health and diabetes management.

Saturated Fats

Often called "solid fats" as they are solid at room temperature. Saturated fats are found naturally in animal-based foods (beef, lard, full-fat dairy products), and tropical fats (coconut and palm oil). It is best to limit intake to 5% of total daily caloric intake to maintain a healthy heart.

Limit: High-fat cheeses (cheddar and swiss), meats like marbled beef and pork, whole fat milk or cream, butter, ice cream, palm and coconut oils.

Tips: When eating meat, trim visible fat or choose leaner options like round or sirloin cuts. When reheating soups or stews, skim solid fats off the surface. As a crunchy alternative, top off your salad with nuts or seeds instead of bacon bits or croutons. Try meatless meals or eat fish a couple times a week.

Trans fat

Also known as trans-fatty acids, trans fat raises LDL cholesterol, leading to heart disease. Although trans fat is found naturally in some meat and dairy products, the primary source is in processed food.

Limit: Donuts, baked goods, frozen pizza, cookies, chips, pie crusts, and fried foods.

Tips: Look for "partially hydrogenated" oils or shortenings on the ingredient list in food packages and limit consumption choosing more whole foods instead of processed, prepackaged food. The FDA banned trans fat, but they can still be present in small amounts.

Plan Your Healthy Fat Grocery Shopping List

FOODS HIGH IN SATURATED FAT

Skip this...

HEALTHIER ALTERNATIVES

Buy this...

Butter, lard shortening, coconut oil, and palm oil

Margarine (look for 0 grams trans fat on the label), vegetable oil spread, olive oil, canola oil, corn oil, cooking spray

Whole milk, 2% milk, half & half, cream

Skim or 1 % milk, fat free half & half

Red meat, ground beef, sausage, bacon, organs meats (liver or kidneys)

White meat chicken, turkey, pork chop with fat trimmed, ground beef sirloin, fish, soy products, nuts, seeds, or beans.

Poultry skin, visible meat fat

Skinless and trimmed meats

Fried or pan-fried foods

Grilled, baked, roasted, steamed, broiled, or boiled

Deli meats like bologna, pepperoni, or salami

Deli ham, turkey, chicken breast, or extra lean roast beef

Buttered popcorn or chips

Low-fat popcorn, trail mix, or nuts

Icecream

Frozen yogurt sherbet, or low-fat ice cream

Cheese, cottage cheese, sour cream, cream cheese, and whipped cream

Fat-free or reduced fat verisons

Chocolates, cakes, pies, doughnuts, cookies, and brownies

Sugar-free pudding made with low fat milk, vanilla wafers, and animal crackers