



NutritionMatters

Nutrition Services | Health Services Department

Dietary Fat...Where are we now?

Why should I think about the fat in my diet?

- Fats are a concentrated source of energy (calories); too much can lead to weight gain.
- Eating too much fat can increase your risk for heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer (breast, colon and prostate cancer).

Cutting back on the amount of fat you eat and choosing the right types of fat will contribute to a healthy diet.

Is fat really all that bad?

Actually, you do need some fat in your diet for the following reasons:

- Fat gives you energy.
- Fat helps children grow.
- Fat provides you with essential fatty acids needed for normal growth and metabolism. Essential fatty acids are needed throughout your life and cannot be made by your body.
- Fat carries and helps with the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E, K).

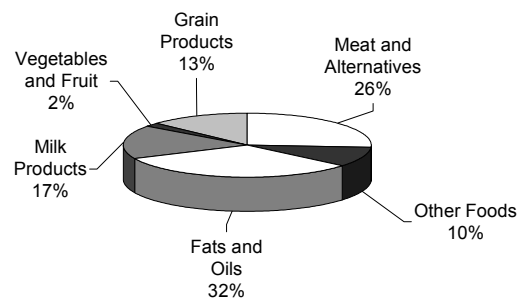
Therefore, although it is important to cut down on the fat you eat, you should not cut it out completely!

How much dietary fat do I need?

You should aim to have between 20 and 35 percent of your total calories from fat. Most Canadians are cutting back on the amount of fat they are eating, but are still eating too much or are eating too much of the “less healthy” types of fat! (see page 2)

The amount of fat you need to eat daily depends on your energy (calorie) needs. Your gender, age, height, weight, and level of physical activity determine your energy needs. For example, an elderly woman whose energy needs are lower than a teenager would require less fat in her diet than the teenager.

Where does most of the fat come from?



As shown in the chart above, most of the fat we eat comes from fats and oils like butter, margarine, oil, salad dressing and gravy; meat and alternatives such as fatty meats and poultry with the skin; high fat milk products like cheese and ice cream; and hidden fats in other foods like potato chips, corn chips, and pastries. Contrary to popular belief, grain products such as pasta, rice and bread are generally low in fat.

Are all dietary fats the same?

You hear about many types of fat: animal fat, vegetable fat, saturated fat, polyunsaturated fat, monounsaturated fat, cholesterol, omega-3 fat, hydrogenated fat and trans fat. All of these words create confusion about the types of fats Canadians should be eating and how much.

Food is made up of a mixture of different types of fat. Each type of fat affects the body in various ways. **Not only is it important to decrease the amount of fat you eat, but it is also important to choose healthier fats.** The following is a list of different types of dietary fat and how these fats may affect your health.

Saturated fat: This type of fat is usually solid at room temperature. It is mainly found in animal products such as meat, poultry, cheese, butter and eggs. It is also found in processed foods like cold cuts and potato chips, hard margarine made from hydrogenated vegetable oils, and coconut and palm oil. Saturated fat may raise LDL (bad) cholesterol levels and in turn, increase your risk for heart disease.

Polyunsaturated fat: This type of fat is usually liquid at room temperature and can be found mostly in soft margarine and vegetable oils such as safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean, and sesame. Polyunsaturated fats can help lower the level of LDL (bad) cholesterol in your blood, and in turn lower your risk for heart disease.

Monounsaturated fat: This type of fat is found mostly in canola, olive and peanut oils, some soft margarine, avocado, and nuts and seeds. Monounsaturated fats may help raise HDL (good) cholesterol and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol, in turn also lowering your risk for heart disease.

Omega-3 fat: This is a type of polyunsaturated fat that may reduce the risk of heart disease by reducing LDL cholesterol and reducing blood clotting. This type of fat is found in fatty fish like salmon, sardines, trout and tuna, nuts and seeds such as flaxseed, and oils such as canola and soybean.



Trans fat: These fats are formed when polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats go through a process called hydrogenation. This process is used to harden liquid oil making it solid or semi-solid at room temperature. Hydrogenated fats are found in shortening, baked goods, cookies, crackers, potato chips, frozen french fries and some margarines. Trans fats act like saturated fat in your body and may raise LDL (bad) cholesterol levels.

Aim to replace saturated and trans fat with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat, in addition to reducing your total fat intake.



Dietary cholesterol is found only in foods of animal origin like meat, eggs, and milk products. Contrary to popular belief, cholesterol in the diet has little influence on blood cholesterol levels.

Should my child be on a low fat diet?

No! Fat is a very important nutrient for both children and adults. The difference between adult and children's meals and snacks is that there should be less emphasis on lower fat foods for young children. When preparing food for your children, keep the following in mind:

- Children need extra calories for their rapid growth, especially from nutrient packed foods like cheese, eggs, and yogurt.
- Emphasize fats from vegetable sources such as canola or olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds as these are heart friendly fats.
- Use Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating to help plan your family's meals and snacks.
- To establish lifelong eating habits, be a role model for your children and include a
- variety of vegetables and fruit in your meals.
- Occasionally serving french fries with a meal or ice cream for dessert is okay as part of healthy eating.



As children grow into adolescence, there should be a gradual decrease in the amount of fat they eat. This decrease should begin after their second birthday and be very gradual. By adolescence, the fat intake of youth should resemble what is recommended for adults.

What can I do to eat the right amount of fat each day?

Cook à la low fat:

bake
broil
braise
boil
microwave
steam
poach
grill
barbeque
use a non-stick frying pan



Eating the right amount of fat each day can be accomplished by following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

Try the following healthy eating tips:

- To replace higher fat foods, eat 5 to 10 servings of vegetables and fruit each day. It's easy, one serving is equal to one medium sized fruit or ½ cup of vegetables or one cup of salad. Have vegetables and fruit for a snack or enjoy fruit for dessert.



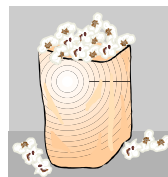
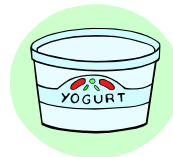
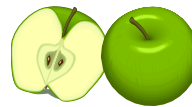
- Reduce portion sizes of meat and poultry and choose leaner cuts such as: sirloin tip, inside round, flank steak, skinless chicken, pork tenderloin, veal or lean ham.
- Use low fat milk products like cottage cheese, yogurt, or milk. Look for cheese that is less than 20% M.F. (milk fat).

- Lighten up on added fats like butter, margarine, oil, salad dressings, and mayonnaise. Either use less, or buy or make a low fat version. Creamy salad dressings such as Caesar or Ranch have more saturated fat than clear dressings such as Italian.
- Substitute fish or legumes like lentils, beans or chickpeas for meat. Try a meatless meal once or twice a week.

Sensational Snack Ideas

Choosing snacks that are healthy and low in fat will add important nutrients to your diet without adding extra fat. Here are some examples of healthy low-fat snacks.

- fresh fruit or fruit salad
- dried fruit
- raw vegetables sticks with low-fat salad dressing
- skim or 1% milk or chocolate milk
- low-fat yogurt
- sherbet, sorbet or frozen yogurt
- pretzels, plain popcorn, pita puffs, or rice cakes
- graham wafers
- gingersnap cookies
- low-fat whole grain crackers with low-fat cheese
- whole grain breads
- homemade muffins (use no more than 1/4 cup of oil for 12 muffins)
- dry cereal
- baked tortilla chips with salsa



Flavour Savers: Add flavour without the fat...

These sauces or condiments can be used to add zip to any stir-fry, meat or vegetarian dish:

BBQ and steak sauces
chili sauce
ketchup
pickles
chutney
hot pepper sauce
seafood sauce
relish
plum sauce
hoisin sauce
canned gravy
packaged gravy
black bean sauce
oyster sauce
salsa
all mustards
all herbs and spices
soy sauce

Something sweet?

honey
jam
apple butter
brown sugar
molasses
corn syrup
maple syrup