

Fat: The Good, the Bad, the Ugly

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It is recommended that more than one-fourth of our daily calories come from fat (30 percent), but a diet too high in fat may contribute to certain health-related problems. Learn the facts about fats . . . and win the battle of the good versus the bad and the ugly!

Fat facts

- Fat is necessary because it plays many critical roles in the body.
 - Fat is a very rich energy source that supports cell function, helps insulate the body, protects us from injury, helps vitamin absorption, and adds flavor and texture to foods.
- A diet high in fat can increase the risk of developing obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. A diet rich in fat *and* cholesterol can further increase the risk for developing heart disease and high blood pressure.
- Low-fat, reduced-fat, and fat-free versions of high-fat products can serve as healthy alternatives. BUT because a product is fat-free does not mean it is calorie-free.
- Good (unsaturated) fats contain just as many calories as the bad (saturated) and the ugly (trans fats).
- Good fats reduce the risk of developing heart disease by helping to reduce blood cholesterol.
- Bad fats can raise blood cholesterol and are found in high-fat dairy foods like milk, cheese, cream, and butter and in animal foods like meat and poultry products.
- The ugly trans fats may be even more effective than bad saturated fats at raising blood cholesterol.
- Eat a diet that consists of no more than 300 mg of cholesterol and 30 percent total fat. Of this total 30 percent, 7 percent to 10 percent should be saturated fat, 10 percent to 15 percent should be monounsaturated, and 10 percent should be polyunsaturated fat.
- Unsaturated fats include canola, olive, safflower, and peanut oils.



- Polyunsaturated fats include soy, sunflower, corn, and flaxseed oils, and fatty fish like salmon, tuna, and mackerel.
- Saturated oils include coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils.
- Many products are available that contain trans fats. Look at the list of ingredients on the label: If the product contains hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils (especially if it is the first ingredient), the product contains trans fats.
- Look for the percent of trans fats in foods appearing on labels in 2006.
- Read and compare food labels when you shop. Pay attention to suggested serving sizes, total cholesterol, and the percentages of total and saturated fat each product contains.
- Trade in the bad for the good: Replace red meats with fish. Substitute butters, margarines, and other high-fat dairy products with healthier versions like canola, olive, flaxseed, and soybean oils. Replace handfuls of chips or fries with a handful of nuts or avocado slices. Reduce the total amount of oil you use by using herbs and seasonings on foods like breads, popcorn, vegetables, and meats.

- When choosing foods from the meats and dairy groups, focus on those having low, reduced, and no amounts of cholesterol and fat. Use the guide given below.

Choosing healthy meats

- Choose lean cuts of meat.
- Avoid meats with a lot of white marbling (this is fat).
- Trim the skin from poultry.
- Broil, roast, or bake meats instead of frying.
- Marinate lean meats in orange or apple juice instead of gravies or fatty sauces.
- Add spices and seasonings for flavor, rather than butter or other flavored sauces containing a lot of fat.

Choosing healthy dairy products

- Avoid the cholesterol-containing yolks of eggs. Substitute 2 egg whites for 1 whole egg.
- Choose skim, ultra-skim, or reduced-fat milks.
- Choose reduced-fat or low-fat cheeses and dairy products.
- In some dishes, you can replace ice cream with low-fat or nonfat yogurt; in some homemade baked goods, you can substitute applesauce for the oil.

Start simple with this easy-to-make fruit dessert. This low-fat recipe would make a great snack, too.

Chilled Fruit Delight

Ingredients:

- 16 oz. nonfat vanilla yogurt
- 1 c. applesauce
- 1 can (8 oz.) crushed pineapple in juice, drained
- 1 c. blueberries or sliced strawberries
- 1 banana, thinly sliced
- 1/2 c. low-fat granola
- Optional – 2 tablespoons sliced almonds (toasted)

Directions:

Blend the yogurt and applesauce together in a large serving bowl. Gently fold in the rest of the ingredients. Chill. Top with granola and serve immediately.

Nutrition facts per serving (1/2 cup): 130 calories, 0.5 g total fat, 0 g saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 50 mg sodium, 1 g dietary fiber, 4 g protein