

Fat Facts

Most Canadians are aware of the recommendation to reduce the amount of fat in their diets. Yet many people are confused about how to do this. The following information will help you to separate fat facts from fiction.

Why should I be concerned about fat?

Eating too much fat, especially saturated and trans fat, can raise blood cholesterol levels. Over time, this can lead to an increased risk of heart disease. Diets that are high in fat have also been linked with certain types of cancer. And, because fat contains twice as much energy as protein or carbohydrates, eating less fat can help people to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

How much fat should I eat?

The new recommendation for daily fat intake is 20-35% of your total caloric intake. The healthy daily fat intake range is:

- ☐ 56 - 97 grams of fat for a man consuming 2500 calories/day
- ☐ 40 - 70 grams of fat for a woman consuming 1800 calories/day.

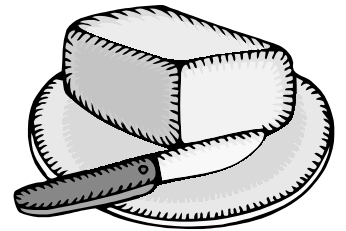
What types of fat should I use?

Diets high in saturated fat tend to raise blood cholesterol levels. Hydrogenated fats or oils, and the trans-fat that they contain, behave like saturated fats and can also elevate blood cholesterol. Healthier types of fat are monounsaturated, polyunsaturated, and omega-3 sources.

Which is better - butter or margarine?

While they both contain the same amount of fat, they contain different types. Butter contains mostly saturated fat. All margarines are not created equal. Some margarines contain hydrogenated oil and this means that these margarines have trans fat in them. Margarines

that are non-hydrogenated contain more monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat. When choosing margarine for your family's use, look for a soft margarine that is labeled non-hydrogenated and that lists liquid oil, such as canola, corn, olive, or soya oil, as its first ingredient.



Remember, whichever choice you make, use all fats sparingly!

Should I cut out high - cholesterol foods?

Eating high-cholesterol foods, like eggs, liver, and shrimp, has only a small effect on blood cholesterol level. Most people can enjoy these foods in moderation. Reducing the total amount of fat in your diet, especially the saturated fat and trans fat, is more likely to have an impact on your health than simply avoiding high-cholesterol foods.

How can I choose lower fat products at the grocery store?

Choosing more breads, cereals, grains, vegetables, fruit, and legumes, such as lentils and beans, is a good start. These foods are naturally low in fat. You can also shop for leaner meats and choose fish and poultry often. Compare the labels on milk products and buy those with the lower fat content (% M.F.). For example, use skim or 1% milk and cheese that contains less than 20% M.F. Some products contain *Nutrition Information* on the label. You can use this information to choose foods that have less fat.

What about low-fat, fat-free, cholesterol-free, and "light" foods?

Don't be fooled into thinking that you can eat all you want of a food just because it's low in fat or fat-free. Remember that other food components - starch, sugar, and protein - also contribute to a food's energy value, or calories. Foods labelled "cholesterol-free" don't contain cholesterol but can still be high in fat. Also, the term "light" doesn't necessarily refer to fat. It can also mean a food is "lighter" in colour, flavour, texture, or salt content, so be sure to read the label.

Do I have to change the way I cook?

While there is some room in your diet for higher-fat choices (like fried foods or rich desserts, for example), most foods you eat should be prepared with little or no added fat. Use lower-fat cooking methods, like roasting, broiling or steaming, instead of frying. Learn to flavour foods with herbs, spices, and other fat-free flavorings, like garlic, lemon juice, and vinegar. Experiment with reducing the fat in your favourite recipes, or try a new recipe from one of the many low-fat cookbooks available. When you do prepare a favourite high-fat food, remember to have a smaller portion and balance this with lower-fat choices throughout the day.

Should children follow a low fat diet?

Children, especially those under two years of age, should not be put on low-fat diets. Including some higher-fat choices in a growing child's diet is appropriate because they have higher energy needs and smaller appetites. At the same time, introducing children to some of the same lower-fat choices eaten by other family members can help them learn to enjoy these foods, too.

For more information...

If you would like more information about choosing and preparing lower-fat foods, call the Nutrition and Physical Activity Advice Line at 905-546-3630. Supermarket Safari can help you learn how to make healthy choices in the grocery store. Register by calling 905-546-2424 ext 3521.

The fats found in most foods are actually a mixture of different kinds of fats. Here is a quick guide to the main types of fat and what foods they can be found in.

Type of fat	Food sources
Saturated	Meats, poultry, butter, whole milk products, and coconut and palm oils.
Polyunsaturated	Corn, safflower, sunflower, soybean, and flaxseed oils.
Monounsaturated	Canola, olive, and peanut oils, many types of nuts.
Trans-fatty acids	Hydrogenated oils found in many margarines and shortening. Also an ingredient in many commercially-prepared foods, like cookies, pastries, crackers, and french fries.
Omega-3	Fish, especially salmon, tuna, and herring, fish oils.
Cholesterol	Found only in foods of animal origin, such as meat, eggs, and dairy products. Also made by our bodies.

