



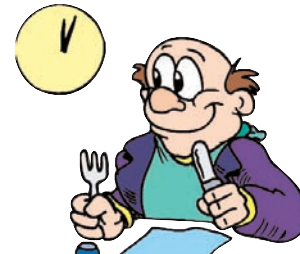
Food Facts

Fat - Getting the Balance Right

Fats form an important part of our diet, but how much and which sort of fat should we be eating for our health?

How much?

It is important not to eat too much fat. High intakes of fat are linked with many health problems, and can lead to overweight. In recent years we have been encouraged to reduce our total fat intake. Some food labels now give us 'Guideline Daily Amounts' for fats and calories and appear like this:



Guideline Daily Amounts		
Each Day	Women	Men
Calories	2000	2500
Fat	70g	95g

This table tells us how much total fat and how many calories men and women with average activity levels should be aiming for each day. It is a guide only and intakes will vary from day to day.

This will also help us to decide whether a particular food contributes a little or a lot of fat (or calories) to our daily intake.

Which type?

Some fats are far better for our health than others.

Food labels often give the type of fat present in the food, as well as the amount.

The **total** amount of fat is given first, and is shown per 100g of the food, and often also per serving



Nutrition Information		
	Typical Values	
	Per 100g	Per serving (16g)
Energy	2086KJ 497kcal	334KJ 80kcal
Protein	7.0g	1.1g
Carbohydrate (of which sugars)	66.6g 18.8g	10.7g 3.0g
Fat	22.6g	3.6g
of which		
saturates	9.8g	1.6g
monounsaturates	8.2g	1.3g
polyunsaturates	4.6g	0.7g
Fibre	3.2g	0.5g
Sodium	0.6g	0.1g

There are 3 main types of fat – **saturated**, **monounsaturated**, and **polyunsaturated** and most foods contain a mixture of these three. Some nutritional labels give more information than others. The full label will tell you how much of the total fat comes from the saturated type of fat, and some labels (like the one above) go even further, giving you the amount of mono- and polyunsaturated fat present.

So, which fats should we choose?

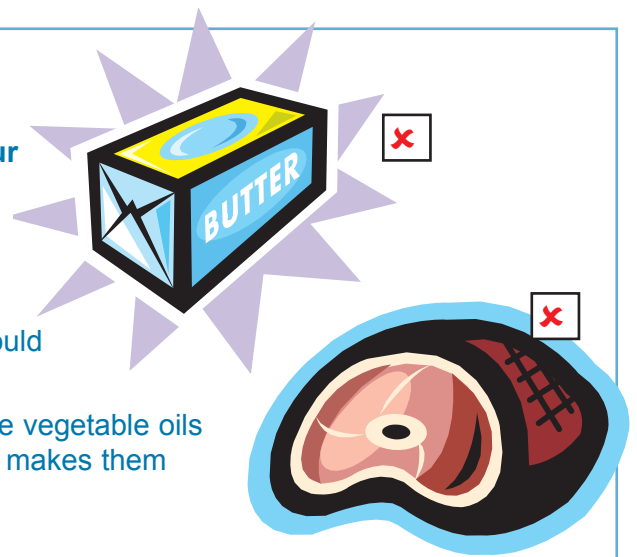
'Not-so-good' fats and oils – try to reduce these as they can raise your blood cholesterol levels and increase your risk of heart disease.....

- ❑ **Saturated Fats** These include harder fats like lard, butter, fat on meats, fatty meat products, pastries and are also found in full fat dairy food, and many takeaway meals. No more than one third of our total fat intake should come from saturated fats in the diet.
- ❑ **Trans Fats (Hydrogenated Vegetable Oils)** - These are vegetable oils which have been processed to make them hard; it also makes them less healthy, like the saturated fats.

They are found in processed foods like pastry, cakes, and biscuits. These will appear on the list of ingredients found on the food label.

We should be cutting down on these too.

Ingredients: Wheat flour, **partially hydrogenated vegetable oil**, sugar, malt extract, glucose syrup...

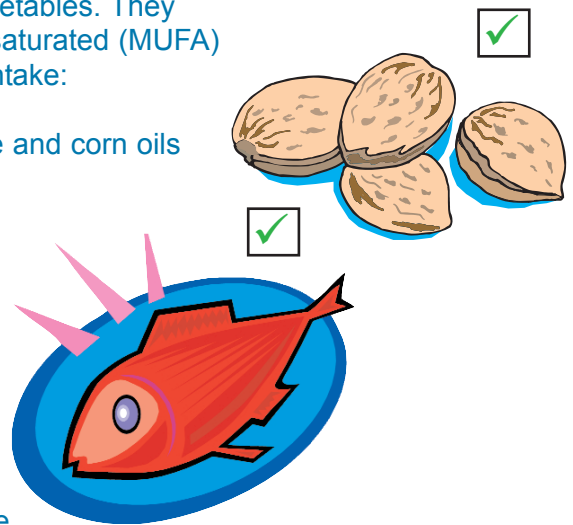


'Good' Fats and Oils are the ones to go for instead, as they can lower your blood cholesterol levels and the tendency for your blood to clot.....

- ❑ **Unsaturated Fats/Oils** These are healthier fats and are found generally in plant foods such as fruit, seeds, nuts and vegetables. They can be divided into polyunsaturated (PUFA) and monounsaturated (MUFA) fats and each should provide around one third of our fat intake:

- ~ **Polyunsaturated fats** include sunflower, soya, sesame and corn oils
- ~ **Monounsaturated fats** include olive and rapeseed oils

- ❑ **Omega 3 fats** - these are a group of unsaturated fats called '**essential**' fatty acids as they can not be made in the body in sufficient amounts. **Oily fish** such as pilchards, sardines, salmon and mackerel are excellent sources. In smaller amounts they can be obtained from plant foods such as rapeseed, walnuts, soya, flax and linseed oils. We really need to increase our intake of these healthy fats. Not only can they keep our hearts healthy, there is growing evidence that they offer many other health benefits as well.



Getting the balance right...

Extremely low fat diets would limit the amount of fat soluble vitamins and essential fats in our diet. All fats are high in calories, giving us 9 calories for every gram eaten. It is important for our health and to help prevent us from becoming overweight that we do not eat too much fat. By reducing the unhealthy saturated fats in the diet, and replacing some of this fat with the healthier unsaturated fats, we will be getting a better balance for our health.

By L Donovan RD

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