**Day 11**

**Title: Fats & Oils - A Drop Does A Lot!**

Fats and oils often get a bad rap because they have a lot of calories and can lead to unwanted pounds. We can’t do without fat and oils completely, though. Certain fats and oils contain essential fatty acids. These are fatty acids that our bodies cannot make and must come from outside sources. Fat stores energy in our bodies and is an important part of cell membranes. It also aids in metabolism, immune system function, and growth. This doesn’t mean you get a free pass to drench half of what you see in butter and fry the other half in lard. We don’t need *that* much fat and oil.

**Good fats vs. bad fats**

If you’ve ever heard about “good fats” and “bad fats,” what you’ve most likely come across is the difference between saturated fats and unsaturated fats. All fats and oils have a mixture of both types, but one type will be more predominant. Generally, fats that are solid at room temperature, such as butter, margarine, shortening, and animal fats, are mainly saturated fats. Aim to limit the amount of saturated fats you eat.

Oils tend to be predominantly unsaturated fats, the “good fats.” They contain monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat. Each of these fats contain the essential fatty acids that we need. Examples include olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, and soybean oil, among others. Fatty fish, such as salmon, avocados, and olives also contain these heart-healthy fats.

**How much fat & oil can I have each day?**

Even though “good fats” contain essential fatty acids, they should still take up a small portion of your diet. Unlike other food groups, where the goal is to eat a certain number of servings each day, the goal with fats and oils is to eat **no more** than a certain amount per day.

Fat from all sources contribute to your daily limit. Many types of foods already have fats and oils in them, so it’s not necessary to add additional fat to your diet. Foods like butter, whole milk, fatty meats, and fried foods contain fats that contribute to your daily limit. Even healthy foods with heart-healthy fats like avocados, nuts, and seeds count toward your limit, so watch how much you eat each day.

As with all other food groups, though, the number of servings you should stay under each day is based on your age, gender, and level of physical activity. You should aim to eat no more than [x] teaspoons of fat & oil each day.

**Are there any kinds of fats or oils I should avoid?**

Yes. Try and avoid artificial trans fats completely. This will get easier, since the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has recently given food manufacturers until 2017 to remove artificial trans fats from their foods.

Also, swap out saturated fats and oils for unsaturated fats. Limit your use of butter, shortening, and other fats that are solid at room-temperature. Use olive and vegetable oils instead.

**How can I keep the amount of fat and oil I eat in check?**

* Think about how foods are prepared, and that will tell you a lot about how much oil is in the foods. Fried foods, even if they’re fried in “good fats,” still contain a lot of calories. Limit fried foods to special occasions, or choose not to eat them all together.
* When eating out, avoid high-fat dishes by avoiding those that are described as fried, creamy, buttery, cheesy, or au gratin.
* When you’re cooking, notice how much oil you us. See if you can do with less. Use oils instead of butter, shortening, and other animal-based fats.
* Keep reading food labels and make sure there aren’t any partially hydrogenated oils in your food. These are artificial trans fats. If there are, put the food back on the shelf.

**A final word**

Fats and oils do have a place in a healthy, balanced diet. Some are healthier options than others. Stay under the recommended amount, though. While there’s almost no such thing as too many vegetables, too much fat and oil can wreck your balanced diet.

**Sources:**

Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. (2015, June 16). Food Additives & Ingredients - Final Determination Regarding Partially Hydrogenated Oils (Removing Trans Fat). Retrieved August 22, 2015, from <http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/FoodAdditivesIngredients/ucm449162.htm>

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