



Facts on Fats



Student Wellness Centre

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Basics of Fat

Energy comes from all types of different foods. Carbohydrates, protein, and fat all contribute to the body's energy needs. There are many kinds of fats.

- **Saturated fat** – solid at room temperature, these fats have no double bonds in their structure



- **Unsaturated fat** – usually liquid at room temperature, these are considered oils
 - Monounsaturated fat – only one double bond in the structure
 - Polyunsaturated fat – multiple double bonds in the structure



- **Trans fat** – these fats have double bonds, but they are straight like saturated fats in structure
 - Typically found in fried foods, commercial baked goods and processed foods

Dietary Fats can come from many different food sources, such as:

- Plants such as nuts, seeds and oils
- Dairy such as milk, butter
- Animals such as beef, fish, eggs

Is Butter or Margarine Better?

- Butter is higher in saturated fat, while margarine is higher in polyunsaturated fats
- Margarine no longer has trans fats
- They both have the same amount of energy

Bottom line: Use what you like, if saturated fats are not going over 10% of your energy intake

Essential Fatty Acids

Essential Fatty Acids (EFA) are a necessity for life but are not made in the body, so they must be taken in the diet. EFAs are needed for

Myth: Eggs are bad for you because they raise cholesterol.

Fact: Eating an excess of saturated and trans fats will increase your cholesterol more than eating one egg per day.

the proper function and structure of cells in the body.

EFA's have a variety of roles including:

- Increase the absorption of vitamins and minerals
- Nourish the skin, hair, and nails
- Promote proper nerve function
- Help produce hormones; and ensure normal growth and development.

Examples of EFA's are alpha-linolenic acid (which are Omega 3) and linoleic acid (which are Omega 6) fatty acids. EPA and DHA are not considered essential but greatly improve health.

Cut It Down

Evidence shows that eating an excess of 10% of your daily energy requirement as saturated fat over many years can increase the risk of negative health outcomes.

Reducing foods that are high in saturated fat will decrease bad cholesterol (LDL) and lower total blood cholesterol. However, it is important to practice moderation than to avoid them altogether.

Popular dishes to try that use foods lower in saturated fat, but higher in unsaturated fats:

- Nuts and seeds in hummus
- Avocado in guacamole
- Salmon and other fatty fish in sushi
- Vegetable oils, such as canola and olive

The Problems with Low-Fat Foods

Advertised to lower calorie intake, many foods available have a low-fat option. When companies remove fat from products, they often replace it with sugar and refined flour.

A diet too low in fat may increase risk of:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Irregular periods
- Dry skin
- Decreased feeling of fullness

Trans Fat

Trans fat have many uses, but they cause many health issues. Consumption of trans fats has decreased over the last few decades in Canada.

In September of 2018, Health Canada banned foods containing partially hydrogenated oils (a main source of trans fat). All North American products are now produced without trans fats. There are very small amounts in beef, lamb, and dairy products that occur naturally, so they do not need to be avoided.

***Quick tip:** Some food markets still import products that have trans fats. Be aware of buying such items when shopping.

Tips For Choosing Fats

Limit

- Tropical oils (palm oil, coconut oil and palm kernel)
- Products with higher saturated fats such as:
 - Red meat
 - Lard and shortening

Try These Options

- Using cooking oils that have a high proportion of monounsaturated fats (olive oil, avocado oil, canola oil, almond oil)
- If eating fish, try fatty varieties (herring, mackerel, salmon and trout)
- Consume plenty of plant alternatives (e.g., replace half the meat in chilies or curries with lentils)
- Spread out the amount of fat that goes into each meal to feel satisfied and maintain the feeling of fullness for longer
- Use oil-based dressings more often than bacon, cheese, and creamy dressings as toppings

- Try cooking with an air fryer instead of deep fryer

EPA/DHA (Commonly known as Fish Oils)

Fish oils have many benefits for overall health.

- Lowers risk of heart disease
- Brain, nerve, and eye development in infants
- Improves function of the brain

If you are taking fish oil supplements, make sure they have a Natural Product Number and take no more than 3 grams per day. This is safe for pregnant women as well.

Fat Food Label

Nutrition Facts Table

Whole wheat bread

Nutrition Facts			
Per 2 slices (175g)			
Amount		% Daily Value	
Calories 140			
Fat 1.5 g		2 %	
Saturated 0.3 g + Trans 0.5 g		4 %	
Cholesterol 0 mg			
Sodium 290 mg		12 %	
Carbohydrate 26 g		9 %	
Fibre 3 g		12 %	
Sugars 2 g			
Protein 5 g			
Vitamin A	0 %	Vitamin C	0 %
Calcium	4 %	Iron	10 %

On the nutrition facts table, total fat, saturated fat, and trans-fat are always listed.

The total fat minus the saturated and trans-fat is any leftover unsaturated fat.

Aim to have foods that have a lower portion of saturated fat compared to total fat to get more unsaturated fats in your diet.

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Additional Resources

wellness.usask.ca

[Canada's Food Guide](#)

[Heart and Stroke Canada \(Eating at Home\)](#)

[Healthy Cooking Methods](#)

