

Good and Bad Fats

Dietary fat intake is necessary for three reasons: it provides the body with essential fatty acids, it is required for absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K), and it prolongs the emptying time of the stomach and provides satiety until the next meal. Any type of fat should be eaten in moderation, since fat contains more than twice the calories of protein or carbohydrate. However, all fats are not created equal. There are four types of fats in the foods we eat: saturated, polyunsaturated, monounsaturated, and *trans*-fatty acids.

Saturated Fats

Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature. They are contained in foods from animals and some plants, including whole milk, cream, ice cream, whole-milk cheese, butter, lard, meats, palm kernel oil, coconut oil, and cocoa butter. Saturated fats **raise blood cholesterol**.

Trans-Fats

Trans-fats are produced during a chemical process called hydrogenation, which changes an unsaturated (i.e., relatively healthy) fat such as vegetable oil into a more stable form. It is commonly done to prolong the shelf-life of baked goods such as cookies, crackers, breads, chips, and pastries. It is also common in french fries, onion rings, donuts and other commercially-fried foods. The result of this hydrogenation process is *trans*-fat, a substance that **raises LDL (“bad”) cholesterol, lowers HDL (“good”) cholesterol**, and may be worse for your body than saturated fat. The key words to look for to identify *trans*-fats is “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated”. Hydrogenated fats in margarine and other fats are acceptable if the first ingredient is liquid vegetable oil and the product contains no more than 2 grams of saturated fat per tablespoon.

Polyunsaturated Fats

Polyunsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature and in the refrigerator. They include plant oils such as safflower, sesame, soy, corn and sunflower-seed oils as well as nuts and seeds. These fats tend to help rid your body of newly formed cholesterol, thus **keeping blood cholesterol down and reducing cholesterol deposits in artery walls**.

Monounsaturated Fats

Monounsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature, but start to solidify in the refrigerator. Included in this category are olive, canola and peanut oils and avocados. Monounsaturated fats **may help reduce blood cholesterol**, provided the diet is very low in saturated fat.

Recommendations

- Total fat intake should make up 20-30% of the diet.
- Total saturated fat plus *trans*-fat intake should not exceed 10% of total calories for healthy people.
- Individuals with coronary heart disease, diabetes, or high LDL cholesterol should consume no more than 7 percent of total calories from saturated and *trans*-fats.
- Whenever possible, choose polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats rather than saturated or *trans*-fats.