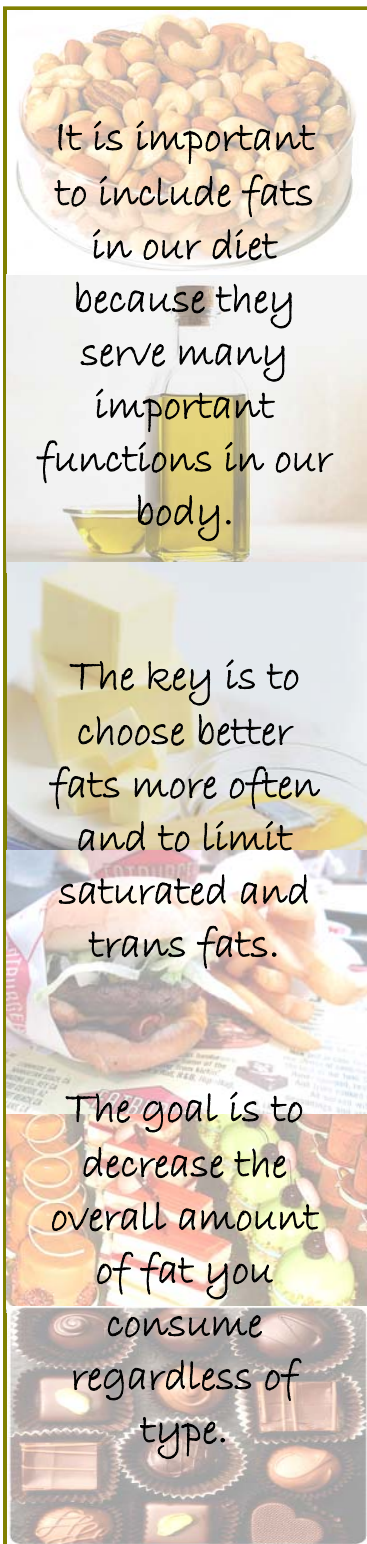


Fat - To Eat or Not to Eat



It is important to include fats in our diet because they serve many important functions in our body.

The key is to choose better fats more often and to limit saturated and trans fats.

The goal is to decrease the overall amount of fat you consume regardless of type.

Why our body needs fat

Over the years, our society has become somewhat 'fat phobic.' With fat getting a bad name with consumers, food companies have adapted by developing 'low-fat' and 'fat-free' foods. However, believe it or not, fat serves many vital functions in our bodies. Fat is an important source of stored energy, an important component of cell membranes and is required in the production of many hormones that control our nervous system and body's response to inflammation. Fat also helps to keep your hair and skin healthy and helps to protect your organs. Furthermore, fat is required for the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K), carries flavour, gives mouth-feel to foods, and provides satiety after eating.

Since fat plays so many critical roles in our body, it is not healthy to cut them out of our diet. The key is to choose healthier fats more often and limit the consumption of unhealthy fats.

How fat affects your health

Although our body needs some fat, consuming an excess, or consuming large amounts of certain types of fats can be hazardous to our health. Eating large amounts of fat can lead to obesity (since they are calorie-dense), which can increase your risk of developing many other health complications such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and coronary artery disease.

How much fat should I include in my diet?

It is recommended that Canadians consume less than 30% of their calories from fat and less than 10% of calories from saturated fats.

Average fat intakes among British Columbian men age 51 to 70 years:

Type of fat	Recommended intake (g) (based on 2000 kcal/day)	Actual Intake (g)	Amount of fat in a bacon cheeseburger, fries, vanilla milkshake
Total fat	67	84	69.1
Saturated fat	22	27	27.5
Monounsaturated fat (MUFA)	There is no Dietary Reference Intake set for monounsaturated fat.	31	----
Polyunsaturated fat (PUFA)	There is no Dietary Reference Intake set	15	----
Linolenic acid (omega-3)	AI: 1.6 and 1.1 g/d for men and women.	150 mg	----
Linoleic acid (omega-6)	19-50: AI of 17 g/d for males and 12 g/d for females; 14 g/d and 11 g/d for older males and females, respectively	13.2	----

Source: Forster-Coull L, Levy Milne R, Barr SI. British Columbia Nutrition Survey. Ministry of Health Services, Health Canada and University of British Columbia; 2004.

It is important to remember that although some fats are healthier than others, the goal for health is to reduce the overall amount of fat that you consume in your diet.

Is there such thing as healthy fats and unhealthy fats?

Healthy fats: Unsaturated fats: Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated

Both mono- and polyunsaturated fats are generally regarded as the 'good' fats because they can actually help lower your cholesterol levels and risk of heart disease and stroke. Unsaturated fatty acids increase the amount of good HDL (high density lipoproteins) cholesterol and decrease the amount of bad LDL (low density lipoproteins) cholesterol, in your blood. The best way to differentiate between unsaturated and saturated fats is to remember that unsaturated fats are liquid at room temperature (saturated fats are solid at room temperature). Vegetable oils (except for coconut and palm), and nut and seed oils are all unsaturated fats.

Two of the most popular polyunsaturated fats are omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Getting adequate amounts of omega-6 fats is not a concern because our diet provides more than enough of this type of fat. It is more important to ensure you are getting enough omega-3s as they may prevent cardiovascular disease, and improve immune and inflammatory disorders. Omega 6 and omega 3 fatty acids are essential, meaning they must be obtained from the diet.

It has been proposed that the ratio of omega-3s to omega-6s is an important factor for health outcomes. A typical diet provides a 10:1 ratio of omega-6 to omega-3s, but a ratio of 3:1 is suggested to be most desirable. For more information on omega 3 fatty acids, please see our Omega-3 fact sheet.

Not-so-healthy fats: Trans fats and saturated fats

Consuming saturated and trans fats can increase your risk of heart attack and stroke because it has the opposite effect of unsaturated fatty acids: it can increase your LDL and decrease your HDL levels.

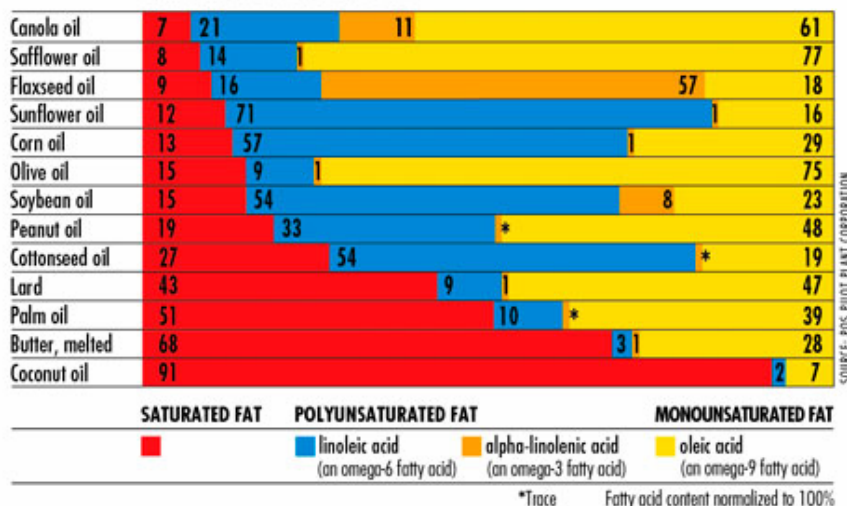
Saturated fats come from both animal (meat and dairy) and some vegetable products (coconut and palm oil). Trans fats occur naturally (from animal products), but the majority of trans fats in our diet comes from the hydrogenation of vegetable oils. Trans fats have been suggested to have the same or worse effects on health as saturated fats. Trans fats are mainly found in commercially processed products (pastries, fried products, cookies, crackers etc), so limiting these products will help you decrease your consumption.

Fat content of some foods

Food Item	Serving size	Calories (kcal)	Fat content (g)	
			Total	Saturated
Cheeseburger with bacon	1	608	36.8	16.2
Croissant	1 (57 g)	231	12.0	6.6
Butter	1 tbsp (15 mL)	103	11.7	7.4
Whipped cream	¼ cup (60 mL)	166	17.8	11.1
Cheddar cheese	1.5 oz (50 g)	202	16.6	10.5
Apple pie	1 slice (155 g)	411	19.4	4.7
Doughnut, iced	1 (57 g)	270	17.7	4.6

Source: Health Canada. Canadian Nutrient File, 2005. Canadian Nutrient File Home Page, http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/food-aliment/ns-sc/nr-rn/surveillance/cnf-fcen/e_index.html

COMPARISON OF DIETARY FATS



The chart on the left shows the composition of various fats and oils. As you can see, the composition varies quite significantly. Remember to choose fats that are high in polyunsaturated fatty acids such as canola, safflower, flaxseed and olive oil, and limit fats that are high in saturated fatty acids such as coconut oil, butter, palm oil and lard.

Source: Canola council of Canada http://www.canola-council.org/health_nutritional.html

A word on low-fat, fat-free foods, and trans fat-free foods

Low-fat and fat-free foods are great if you are trying to control your fat intake but just because a food is fat-free or low in fat does not mean they are automatically a healthy food! You must always remember to evaluate foods based on the overall product rather than just the health claim. Many of these foods usually compensate for the loss in flavour or mouth-feel by adding more sugar or protein, and you may tend to consume more of these foods because you may be less satisfied or just tempted because they contain less fat. It is important to note that the lower-fat version of the same product usually contains virtually the same number of calories.

Another important thing to note is that trans fat-free does NOT equal fat free! It just means that the product contains negligible amounts of trans fats, but it may still be high in fat.

Tips to increase your intake of healthier fats and reduce your fat intake

1. Choose food products with less fat and try to use less fat in homemade cooking or baking.
2. Read labels! The Nutrition Facts label will tell you the fat and trans fat content of the food product. Choose foods that don't contain trans fats or saturated fats.
3. Check the type of fat you are using. Are you using more saturated fats such as shortening, butter, hydrogenated margarine, coconut oil, lard or beef tallow? Try to replace some of that with unsaturated fats (oils).
4. Use healthier cooking methods such as broiling, baking, grilling, sautéing (with a small amount of oil) instead of deep-frying.
5. Portion control! Although nuts and seeds contain good fats they still have a high fat content. Also remember portion control with condiments (dressings, dips and spreads).
6. Limit commercial baked goods (cookies, crackers, pastries) because they are usually high in fat and may contain lots of trans fats.
7. Have fish, poultry, tofu, or other meat substitutes more often. If you have meat, choose leaner cuts of meat and limit processed meats.
8. Choose lower fat dairy products (skim, 1%, 2% milk and cheese such as ricotta, cottage, and cheddar).
9. Choose foods fortified with omega 3 fatty acids (such as eggs, yogurt, cheese) or add some ground flaxseeds (and other omega-3 containing foods) to your salad.

The Prostate Education & Research Centre



Spring 2008

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Visit The Prostate Centre on the World Wide Web:

www.prostatecentre.com

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