

Healthy Eating: Cutting Unhealthy Fats From Your Diet

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Introduction

Foods like cheese, butter, sausage, and desserts may taste good to you, but they can have a lot of saturated fat. Eating too much of this unhealthy fat could lead to high cholesterol and heart disease.

Start with small changes first. Use heart-healthy olive or canola oil instead of butter for cooking. Drink fat-free or low-fat milk instead of 2% milk or whole milk. Pick leaner cuts of meat.

Use this topic as a guide for making healthy choices.

How can you make healthier choices?

Use the following chart as a guide.

Options for replacing unhealthy fats

Food group	Limit foods that are high in unhealthy fats	Make healthier choices
Meat, poultry, and fish	Regular ground beef, fatty or highly marbled cuts, spare ribs, organ meat, poultry with skin, fried chicken, fried fish, fried shellfish, lunch meat, bologna, salami, sausage, hot dogs	Extra-lean ground beef (97% lean), ground turkey breast (without skin added), meats with fat trimmed off before cooking, skinless chicken, low-fat or fat-free lunch meats, baked fish
Dairy products	Whole milk and 2% milk; whole-milk yogurt, most cheeses, and cream cheese; whole-milk cottage cheese, sour cream, and ice cream; cream; half-and-half; whipping cream; nondairy creamer; whipped topping	Low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk and cheeses, low-fat or nonfat yogurt
Fats and oils	Coconut oil, palm oil, butter, lard, shortening, bacon and bacon fat, stick margarine, peanut butter that has been hydrogenated (the no-stir kind)	Canola oil, olive oil, peanut oil, soft margarines with no trans fats and no more than one-third of the total fat from saturated fat, natural peanut butter that has not been hydrogenated
Breads and cereals	Breads in which fat or butter is a major ingredient; most granolas (unless fat-free or low-fat); high-fat crackers; store-bought pastries and muffins	Regular breads, cereals, rice, corn tortillas, pasta, and low-fat crackers. Choose whole grains as much as possible.
Fruits and vegetables	Fried vegetables; coconut; vegetables cooked with butter, cheese, or cream sauce	All fruits and vegetables that do not have added fat
Sweets and desserts	Ice cream; store-bought pies, cakes, doughnuts, and cookies made with coconut oil, palm oil, or hydrogenated oil; chocolate candy	Fruit; frozen yogurt; low-fat or nonfat versions of treats such as ice cream; cakes and cookies made with unsaturated fats and/or those made with cocoa powder

Tips for healthier meals

Try some of these ideas:

- Fill up on fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Think of meat as a side dish instead of as the main part of your meal.
- Try main dishes that use whole wheat pasta, brown rice, dried beans, or vegetables.

- Use cooking methods with little or no fat, such as broiling, steaming, or grilling. Use cooking spray instead of oil. If you use oil, use a monounsaturated oil, such as canola or olive oil.
- Trim fat from meats before you cook them. Drain off fat after you brown the meat or while you are roasting it.
- Chill soups and stews after you cook them so that you can skim off the fat after it gets hard.
- To get more omega-3 fatty acids, have fish twice a week. Add ground flaxseed to cereal, soups, and smoothies. Sprinkle walnuts on salads.
- When you bake muffins or breads, replace part of the fat ingredient (oil, butter, margarine) with applesauce, or use canola oil instead of butter or shortening.
- Read food labels (See figure 1 in appendix) on canned, bottled, or packaged foods. Choose those with little saturated fat and no trans fat.

Restaurant meals

If you eat out often, it may be hard to avoid unhealthy fats. Try these tips:

- Order foods that are broiled or poached rather than fried or breaded. Restaurants often use trans fats (hydrogenated oils) for frying foods.
- Cut back on the amount of butter or margarine that you use on bread. Use small amounts of olive oil instead.
- Order sauces, gravies, and salad dressings on the side, and use only a little.
- When you order pasta, choose tomato sauce rather than cream sauce.
- Ask for salsa with a baked potato instead of sour cream, butter, cheese, or bacon.
- Don't upgrade your meal to a larger size.
- Watch portion sizes. Share an entree, or take part of your food home to eat as another meal. Share appetizers and desserts.

Fat-free foods

Sometimes a fat-free food isn't the best choice. Fat-free cookies, candies, chips, and frozen treats can still be high in sugar and calories. Some fat-free foods have more calories than regular ones. Eat fat-free foods in moderation, as you would other foods.

Credits for Healthy Eating: Cutting Unhealthy Fats From Your Diet

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Author: Healthwise Staff

Medical Review:

Kathleen Romito MD - Family Medicine

Rhonda O'Brien MS, RD, CDE - Certified Diabetes Educator

Appendix

Topic Images

Figure 1

Nutrition Facts Label



Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), <http://www.fda.gov>.

You will find this label on most foods.

The Nutrition Facts label allows you to compare similar foods or to check whether the food is a good source of a nutrient. The **% Daily Value** section can tell you whether a food is high or low in a particular nutrient. If you want to limit a certain nutrient (such as saturated fat or sodium), choose foods with a lower % Daily Value.

Serving sizes of similar foods are the same on all Nutrition Facts labels, to make comparing foods easier. There may be more than 1 serving in each container. This can make a difference when you are watching your calories and nutrients. *The % Daily Value is based on 2,000 calories a day. You may need more or less than 2,000 calories a day. You can see how many calories you need each day at www.choosemyplate.gov.

Note: The "printer friendly" document will not contain all the information available in the online document. Some information (e.g. cross-references to other topics, definitions or medical illustrations) is only available in the online version.



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