



Fat Facts: Choosing the right foods

Was one of your New Year's resolutions to lose weight or to eat a healthier diet?

If so, one of the first places to start is with the amount of fat you consume. The average American consumes 40 - 45 percent of their total calories from fat. One's goal should be to consume less than 30 percent of your total calories from fat over the entire day.

Calculation for percentage of calories from fat: [(grams of fat on label x 9 calories per gram of fat) divided by (total calories listed on product)] x 100 = percent calories from fat.

Preferably you want less than 30 percent fat with less than 10 percent of that from saturated forms. There are three types of fat which are found in different foods. The most dangerous fat is saturated. It will clog the arteries and increase one's risk of heart disease.

Types of fats:

Saturated: usually solid or firm at room temperature. Products with saturated fat are heavily loaded with hydrogen which makes them more solid. Fats that are saturated are usually of animal origin such as the fat in meat, egg yolk, whole milk, cream cheese, butter and lard.

Hydrogenated vegetable shortenings, coconut oil and chocolate are saturated fats although they are of vegetable oil. Saturated fats tend to raise blood cholesterol.

(Poly)unsaturated: usually vegetable fats and oils that are liquid at room temperature. These fats and oils have little hydrogen.

Fats that are polyunsaturated are corn, cottonseed, soybean, safflower, sunflower, peanut and sesame oils. Polyunsaturated fats tend to lower blood cholesterol in some individuals.

Mono-unsaturated: this type of fat has some hydrogen but not enough to

affect blood cholesterol. Olive oil, peanut oil and palm oil are examples. Avocados get most of their fat content from mono-unsaturated oil; in addition, most nuts have a high content of fat but it is mostly mono-unsaturated.

The key is to have a balance between polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated, and watch the total of saturated fats to avoid heart disease.

Keep polyunsaturated at less than 1/3 of total intake, saturated at less than 1/3 and the remaining amount from mono-unsaturated forms.

Try to choose oils that are low in saturation for cooking. Of the oils listed below the optimum oils for cooking are canola and safflower.

Even though hazelnut is low in saturation it is not a universal cooking oil since it carries a distinct flavor with it. Olive oil is good for Italian dishes, stir fry and sauteing, as it has a nice flavor.

Oil	Saturated fat content
Avocado	15-20%
Corn	12%
Extra light olive oil	14%
Hazelnut	7%
Olive	14%
Peanut	17%
Roasted sesame	14%
Safflower	9%
Soy	14%
Sunflower	10%
Walnut	9%
Canola	6%

What is cholesterol?

A substance manufactured by the body is also found in foods of animal origin. Some cholesterol is essential to health but excessive amounts may cause

heart problems in some individuals. Foods to watch that are high in cholesterol and saturated fats are: egg yolks, cream, butter or cheddar cheese.

What are triglycerides?

Triglycerides are fats. They are found in fat containing foods and may also be manufactured in the body from other food sources.

An elevated triglyceride level in the blood is a risk factor in heart disease. A controlled carbohydrate diet may help lower blood triglycerides.

This means that sweets and desserts are restricted. Weight reduction may also help to lower blood triglycerides.

What are hidden fats?

Hidden fats in foods are those not visible. A few examples are: lunch meats, cream soups, hamburger, Danish pastries, liver paste, some specialty crackers, gravies, ice cream, sauces, buttered popcorn, canned or frozen meat, potato chips, casseroles and certain candies.

As you make changes in your eating habits you will learn which foods to stay away from by reading the labels.

Be aware that the manufacturers try to lure you to buy a product by certain advertising tips.

For example, the label might say "no cholesterol" and the product didn't have any in it to start with because it came from a plant.

Or it might say fat free and be a food item that never had fat to start with, such as applesauce.

Be a smart shopper and read the labels and calculate the percentage of fat on all items until you know which ones are acceptable purchases.