

Wise up and slim down with good food choices



Fat is not bad, when eaten in moderate amounts. It is a major source of energy for the body, helps absorb vitamins and is important for growth and good health. Unfortunately, the typical American diet includes much more than its fair share of fat—which is generally high in calories and promotes weight gain! Eating foods with large amounts of fat, especially saturated and trans fats, also can affect the health of your heart and blood vessels. So, it's a good time to begin thinking lean.

Use the label

The Percent Daily Value (PDV) on the Nutrition Facts label shows whether total fat, saturated fat and cholesterol are high or low. Keep in mind that five percent PDV or less is low and 20 PDV or more is high. Additionally, the front of many food packages have information called “claims” that describe a specific level of fat in a food. Some examples of claims to look for are “fat-free,” “low saturated fat” or “light.”

Recommended intake of saturated and trans fats and cholesterol

It is important that less than 10 percent of your daily calories come from saturated fats. Eating foods high in saturated and trans fats or cholesterol may raise the level of LDL (bad) cholesterol and increase the risk of heart disease. Cholesterol in food is a fatty substance found only in animal-based products like egg yolks and whole milk, and these choices should be limited.



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Take another approach



Reduce saturated and trans fats in your diet

Most of the trans fats and hydrogenated fats Americans eat come from cakes, cookies, crackers, pies, fried potatoes, processed meats, household shortening and hard (stick) margarine. Saturated fats often enter our diets as red meat, butter, cheese or whole milk. Here are some ideas that can help you limit saturated and trans fats:

- Sauté with olive oil instead of butter
- Sprinkle slivered nuts or sunflower seeds on salads instead of bacon bits
- Snack on a small handful of nuts rather than potato chips or processed crackers
- Try peanut butter or other nut-butter spreads on celery, bananas, rice cakes or popcorn cakes
- Add slices of avocado, rather than cheese, to your sandwich
- Choose low-fat or fat-free milk
- Eat fish that are high in monounsaturated and omega-3 fats (good fats) instead of meat once or twice a week
- Watch for partially hydrogenated oil in the ingredient list of foods and look for alternatives

Be wise about fat

Many dietitians recommend getting between 20 percent and 25 percent of your daily calories from total fat, with most fats coming from fish, nuts and canola and olive oils.

When you beef up your knowledge about good food choices, you'll keep fat in your diet down and your weight, too.