

Focus on Fats

Learn the facts about trans fat and understand the role fats play in a healthy diet.

Are all fats bad?

Not all fat is bad. Actually, certain kinds play an important role in health. Fats supply the body with energy, provide the building blocks for cell membranes and help key systems in your body function properly. They also help your body absorb certain nutrients such as vitamins A, E, D and K. It's important to understand the difference between saturated, unsaturated and trans fats.

How do different fats affect our bodies?

Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats are beneficial forms of fat that promote heart health. These fats help lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend a daily total fat intake between 20 and 35 percent of calories, with most fats coming from, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats such as fish, nuts and vegetable oils.

Saturated fats and trans fats can increase blood cholesterol levels and increase the risk of heart disease. It is important to limit these fats in your diet. Saturated fats are found mainly in meat, poultry, butter, whole milk, and coconut and palm kernel oils. According to the 2005 Dietary Guidelines, Americans should limit their intake of foods that contain fats and oils high in saturated and trans fats.

What are trans fats?

Trans fats are also known as hydrogenated fats. While trans fats are found naturally in some foods, the major source in the diet is partially

hydrogenated oil. Examples of foods that may contain trans fats are fried foods, cookies, crackers, muffins, potato chips and stick margarine. Since trans fats have been shown to have similar effect on the body as saturated fats, it's important to limit your intake of foods containing trans fats. On average approximately 2.6 percent of the calories in the typical American diet come from trans fats. However your individual intake depends on your food choices. By selecting foods carefully you can minimize your consumption of trans fats.

How do I avoid saturated fats and trans fats when I eat out?

Since nutrition information may not be as readily available while dining out, you can avoid saturated and trans fats by avoiding fried foods such as french fries, fried chicken or battered fried fish. Request that your sautéed items are prepared with olive, soybean or canola oils. Minimize your intake of high calorie sauces that are filled with butter and cream. Either ask for sauces on the side to control the portion or avoid the sauce altogether. Also, ask for salad dressings on the side or dress your salads with low fat dressings and vinaigrettes. Desserts can be a problem since many are high in calories, sugar and fat. In addition, baked goods like brownies, cookies, cakes and pies may contain partially hydrogenated oils and or butter. Share rich desserts with your dining partners so that smaller portions are consumed or order fat free yogurts or fresh fruit. At lunch, if you eat snacks with your sandwich, soup or salad, check the nutrition facts panel on the snack label for total fat, saturated fat and trans fat.



When eating out, how do I steer clear of trans fats - what can I eat?

For your main meal...

Grilled, broiled, baked or sautéed fish like salmon, tuna or trout are low in saturated and trans fats. These fish also have the benefit of being sources of Omega 3 fatty acids which may reduce the risk of heart disease.

Vegetables topped with lemon juice or herbs instead of butter or stick margarine are also a great choice. The key to vegetables is VARIETY! Alternate dark green vegetables like broccoli, collard greens and spinach with orange colored vegetables like carrots, acorn squash, and sweet potatoes.

For snacks without the trans fat - fresh is always best!

Fruit salad bowls filled with fresh varieties of melon and berries are available year round and have no trans fats. Seasonal fruit such as peaches, nectarines or cherries can be a treat when in season. Fresh fruit is also an excellent choice for dessert!

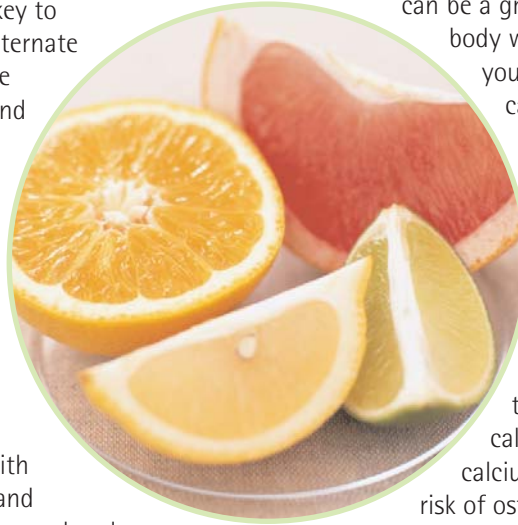
The salad bar is loaded with fresh choices that do not contain saturated or trans fats. Carrot and celery sticks, broccoli and cauliflower crowns sprinkled with a few sesame seeds and a fat free dressing dip are great snacks or appetizers.

With fresh fruits and vegetables, you avoid trans fat, while increasing your intake of fiber. Diets rich in foods containing fiber, such as fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of

heart disease. Fresh fruit and vegetables that are lower in calories than so many other snack choices may also be useful in helping to lower calorie intake.

Beverages

Most beverages don't contain trans fats, but it is important to read nutritional labels on packaged beverages. Since many of us do not drink adequate amounts of fluid, drinking more water and other unsweetened beverages can be a great way to hydrate your body without adding fats to your diet. Dairy beverages can be a great choice. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends three servings of dairy every day. Improve the nutritional quality of your diet by choosing fat free milk and reap the added benefits of calcium - diets rich in calcium may reduce your risk of osteoporosis.



You can make smart decisions about foods in your healthy eating plan:

Learn the facts and make informed choices about the foods you eat. Use the nutrition facts label on packaged foods as a guide. And remember that a healthy eating plan is one that is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt and added sugars. Emphasize fruits and vegetables in your diet and include a variety of lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, nuts, whole grains and fat free or low fat milk products.



The American Dietetic Association's "Keeping trans fat in focus" was used as a source for this fact sheet. For more information visit www.eatright.org.

To learn more about your personal Nutritional DiningStyle™ visit www.diningstyle.com.