



# MEET THE FATS

Some are bad, some are better.

## Fats 101

Fats are essential to give your body energy and to support cell growth. They also help protect your organs and help keep your body warm. Fats help your body absorb some nutrients and produce important hormones, too. Your body definitely needs fat – but not as much fat as most people eat.

These are the major fats in foods: saturated fats and *trans* fats (the “bad” fats), and monounsaturated fats and polyunsaturated fats (the “better” fats). The different fats have different characteristics. They can also have different effects on heart health.

|                                      | BAD FATS  |  | BETTER FATS   |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
|                                      | Saturated Fats  | <i>Trans</i> Fats  | Monounsaturated Fats  | Polyunsaturated Fats  |
| <b>Commonly Found in These Foods</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (Mainly from animals) Beef, lamb, pork, poultry with the skin, beef fat, lard, cream, butter, cheese, other whole- or reduced-fat dairy products</li> <li>• (Some from plants) Palm, palm kernel and coconut oils</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baked goods – pastries, biscuits, muffins, cakes, pie crusts, doughnuts and cookies</li> <li>• Fried foods – French fries, fried chicken, breaded chicken nuggets and breaded fish</li> <li>• Snack foods – popcorn, crackers.</li> <li>• Traditional stick margarine and vegetable shortening</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetable oils – olive, canola, peanut and sesame</li> <li>• Avocados and olives</li> <li>• Many nuts and seeds – almonds and peanuts/peanut butter</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>High in Omega-6 and Omega-3 (ALA)</b> vegetable oils – soybean, corn and safflower</li> <li>Many nuts and seeds – walnuts and sunflower seeds</li> <li>• <b>High in Omega-3 (EPA and DHA)</b> Fatty fish – salmon, tuna, mackerel, herring and trout</li> </ul> |
| <b>Effect on Heart Health</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise bad cholesterol level</li> <li>• Foods high in saturated fats may also be high in cholesterol</li> <li>• Increase risk of heart disease</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise bad cholesterol</li> <li>• May lower good cholesterol</li> <li>• Increase risk of heart disease</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce bad cholesterol</li> <li>• May lower risk of heart disease</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce bad cholesterol</li> <li>• May lower risk of heart disease</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Characteristics</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon atoms saturated with hydrogen atoms</li> <li>• Solid at room temperature</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created in an industrial process by adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils</li> <li>• Solid at room temperature</li> <li>• Contained in “Partially hydrogenated oils”</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have one double-bonded (unsaturated) carbon atom</li> <li>• Liquid at room temperature, but turn solid when chilled</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than one double-bonded (unsaturated) carbon atom</li> <li>• Liquid at room temperature and when chilled</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Daily Limit</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 7% of total daily calories</li> <li>• If you eat 2,000 calories a day, less than 140 calories (15 grams) can be from saturated fats</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less than 1% of total daily calories</li> <li>• If you eat 2,000 calories a day, less than 20 calories (2 grams) can be from <i>trans</i> fats</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total fats should be about 25% to 35% of total daily calories</li> <li>• Eat foods with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats instead of saturated or <i>trans</i> fats</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total fats should be about 25% to 35% of total daily calories</li> <li>• Eat foods with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats instead of saturated or <i>trans</i> fats</li> </ul>   |

## FAQs

### Will eating “good” fats instead of “bad” fats help me lose weight?

No, all fats are equally high in calories relative to carbohydrate and protein. Regardless of the source, if you eat more calories than you need, you will gain weight. Replace the “bad” fats (saturated and *trans* fats) with the “better” fats (monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats) to reduce your risk of heart disease. To avoid weight gain, control the total amount of calories you eat.

### Are all foods labeled “*trans* fat-free” good for me?

Not necessarily. Foods labeled “*trans* fat-free” may still be high in saturated fats and/or low in nutrients. Consider sweets, fatty and salty foods as treats you eat only once in a while. Remember to check the fat content so you can stay within our recommended limits for total, saturated and *trans* fats.

the better  
**FATS**  
sisters™

Be kinder to your heart.



Visit: [AmericanHeart.org/FaceTheFats](http://AmericanHeart.org/FaceTheFats)  
Call: 1-800-AHA-USA-1 or 1-800-242-8721  
E-mail: [inquiries@heart.org](mailto:inquiries@heart.org)

## Live Fat-Sensibly

Follow a healthy dietary pattern – one that balances the amount of calories you consume with the amount of calories you burn. Your diet should emphasize a variety of fruits, vegetables, and grain products, especially whole grains; fat-free and low-fat dairy products, legumes, poultry, and lean meats; and eat fish, preferably oily fish, at least twice a week. In addition, limit your consumption of beverages and foods with added sugars and snack foods, and choose and prepare foods with little or no salt. Choosing smaller portion sizes is also very important to control your total calories and weight.

### Reading Foods Labels

Learning how to read and understand Nutrition Facts labels can help you make healthier choices.

As an example, for a 2,000-calorie diet:

- 40 calories per serving is considered low;
- 100 calories per serving is considered moderate; and
- 400 calories or more per serving is considered high.

| Nutrition Facts             |                      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| Serving Size 1/2 cup (114g) |                      |
| Servings Per Container 4    |                      |
| Amount Per Serving          |                      |
| <b>Calories</b> 90          | Calories from Fat 30 |
| % Daily Value*              |                      |
| Total Fat 3g                | 5%                   |
| Saturated Fat 0.5g          | 3%                   |
| Trans Fat 1.5g              |                      |
| Cholesterol 0mg             | 0%                   |
| Sodium 200mg                | 8%                   |
| Total Carbohydrate 13g      | 4%                   |
| Dietary Fiber 3g            | 12%                  |
| Sugars 3g                   |                      |
| Protein 3g                  |                      |
| Vitamin A 80%               | Vitamin C 60%        |
| Calcium 4%                  | Iron 4%              |

\*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:  
Calories 2,000 2,500

**START HERE**

**CHECK THE TOTAL CALORIES**

**LIMIT THESE NUTRIENTS**

**Quick Guide to % DV**  
5% or less is low  
20% or more is high

**GET ENOUGH OF THESE NUTRIENTS**

### Key Words for Reading Food Labels

The table below provides some of the most commonly used health claims defined by the US Food and Drug Administration that can appear on food packages.

| If a food claims to be ... | It means that one serving of the product contains ...   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Fat</b>                 |   |
| Fat free                   | Less than 0.5 grams of fat  |
| Low fat                    | 3 grams of fat or less  |
| Reduced fat or less fat    | At least 25 percent less fat than the regular product   |
| Low in saturated fat       | 1 gram of saturated fat or less, with not more than 15 percent of the calories coming from saturated fat                                      |
| Lean                       | Less than 10 grams of fat, 4 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol  |
| Extra lean                 | Less than 5 grams of fat, 2 grams of saturated fat and 95 milligrams of cholesterol   |
| Light (lite)               | At least one-third fewer calories or no more than half the fat of the regular product, or no more than half the sodium of the regular product |
| <b>Cholesterol</b>         |   |
| Cholesterol free           | Less than 2 milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams (or less) of saturated fat  |
| Low cholesterol            | 20 or fewer milligrams of cholesterol and 2 grams or less of saturated fat  |
| Reduced cholesterol        | At least 25 percent less cholesterol than the regular product and 2 grams or less of saturated fat  |

### Eating In

Cooking and preparing meals at home allows for more control over the healthfulness of foods.

- Start smart with low-fat cookbooks or recipes.
- Choose liquid vegetable oils or nonfat cooking sprays, and avoid solid fats and shortenings.
- Instead of frying foods, which adds unwanted fat and calories, use cooking styles that add little or no fat to food – stir-fry, roast, grill, boil, poach, sauté and steam.

| When your recipe calls for ...         | Use this instead ...  |
|--|---|
| Whole milk (1 cup)                     | 1 cup fat-free or low-fat milk, plus one tablespoon of liquid vegetable oil   |
| Heavy cream (1 cup)                    | 1 cup evaporated skim milk or 1/2 cup low-fat yogurt and 1/2 cup plain low-fat unsalted cottage cheese  |
| Sour cream                             | Low-fat unsalted cottage cheese plus low-fat or fat-free yogurt; or just use fat-free sour cream, which is also available   |
| Cream cheese                           | 4 tablespoons soft margarine (low in saturated fat and 0 grams <i>trans</i> fat) blended with 1 cup dry, unsalted low-fat cottage cheese; add a small amount of fat-free milk if needed |
| Butter (1 tablespoon)                  | 1 tablespoon soft margarine (low in saturated fat and 0 grams <i>trans</i> fat) or 3/4 tablespoon liquid vegetable oil  |
| Egg (1)                                | 2 egg whites; or choose a commercially made, cholesterol-free egg substitute (1/4 cup)  |
| Unsweetened baking chocolate (1 ounce) | 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder or carob powder plus 1 tablespoon vegetable oil or soft margarine; since carob is sweeter than cocoa, reduce the sugar in the recipe by 25%      |

### Eating Out

Many restaurants offer delicious choices low in saturated fats, *trans* fats and cholesterol.

- Request smaller portions or share entrees. You'll save money and calories.
- Look for foods that are steamed, broiled, baked, grilled, poached or roasted.
- Ask for salad dressings, sauces and gravies to be served on the side.

| Instead of ...                | Try ...   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Cream-based soups             | Broth-based soups with lots of vegetables   |
| Quiche and salad              | Soup and salad  |
| Buffalo chicken wings         | Peel-and-eat shrimp   |
| Bread, muffins, croissants    | Melba toast, pita bread, whole-grain rolls  |
| Fried chicken                 | Grilled chicken and a side salad  |
| Cheeseburgers                 | Grilled chicken sandwiches, sliced meat sandwiches or even a regular hamburger with lettuce, tomato and onion |
| Chicken fried steak           | Veggie burger   |
| French fries                  | Baked potato, brown rice, steamed vegetables  |
| Creamy coleslaw               | Sautéed vegetables, steamed vegetables or tossed salad  |
| Hot fudge sundae or ice cream | Nonfat yogurt, sherbet or fruit ice   |
| Milkshake                     | Fruit juice, low-fat or fat-free milk, or diet soft drink   |