

## Weighing In On

# Dietary Fats

We need a certain amount of fat in our diets to stay healthy. Fats provide needed energy in the form of calories. Fats help our bodies absorb important vitamins—called fat-soluble vitamins—including vitamins A, D and E. Fats also make foods more flavorful and help us feel full. Fats are especially important for infants and toddlers, because dietary fat contributes to proper growth and development.

Problems arise, though, if we eat too much fat. Dietary fats have more than twice as many calories per gram as either proteins or carbohydrates like sugar and starch. Excess calories, of course, can pack on the pounds and raise your risk for diabetes, cancer and other conditions.

### Focus on the Right Fats

Foods can contain a mixture of different fats. Unsaturated fats are considered “good” fats. They’re sometimes listed as “monounsaturated” and “polyunsaturated” fat on Nutrition Facts labels. These can promote health if eaten in the right amounts. They are generally liquid at room temperature, and are known as oils. You’ll find healthful unsaturated fats in fish, nuts and most vegetable oils, including canola, corn, olive and safflower oils.

The so-called “bad” fats are saturated fats and trans fats. They tend to be solid at room temperature. Solid fats include butter, meat fats, stick margarine, shortening, and coconut and palm oils. They’re often found in chocolates, baked goods, and deep-fried and processed foods.

Some Fats  
Are **Healthier**  
Than Others



CONTINUED  
ON NEXT PAGE

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(Continued from previous page)

Experts note that when you eat too many solid fats, you can put your body and health at risk. These fats tend to raise total blood cholesterol, and high cholesterol levels are a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

Experts say that the total fat intake for adults ages 19 and older should be 20 to 35% of calories eaten each day. For children ages 4 to 18, it should be 25 to 35%.

### **Limiting "Bad" Fats**

- Trim extra fat and skin on meats and poultry before cooking.
- Instead of frying, try baking, steaming, grilling or broiling.
- Use olive or canola oil instead of butter or margarine.
- Choose margarines with liquid vegetable oil as the first ingredient, or butter substitutes that list water as the first ingredient.
- Look for recipes that use applesauce instead of butter or oil.
- Instead of making a double-crust pie, try a single crust.
- Serve fruits for dessert.
- Use fat-free or low-fat dairy products when possible.
- Avoid cream dips, gravy and whipped cream.
- Broth-based sauces, vinegar, salsa, lemon and herbs add flavor, not fat.

