



# Diet Specialist

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## Dietary Fats and Fatty Acids

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## DIETARY FAT

### Function

- Supplies fuel for the cells, provides essential fatty acids, act as a carrier for fat soluble vitamins and minerals, forms a protective layer around organs, is a substrate for hormone synthesis and provides energy in the form of adipose tissue.
- Foods that contain a lot of fat can easily hamper your metabolism rate. Fat is not as easily digested as some of the other foods that will slow your metabolism. High fat foods create a scenario where your body simply doesn't know what to do with it all. In this instance, your metabolism slows down and takes a break while your body starts saving the fat for future use. This results not only in a slower metabolism, but in an increase in body fat as well.

### Types of fatty acids

- Saturated fatty acids: Increases low density cholesterol (LDL) which increases the risk of heart disease, and atherosclerosis.
- Monounsaturated fatty acids: Found in oils such as olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, sunflower oil and sesame oil. Other sources include avocados, peanut butter, and many nuts and seeds. This is the most beneficial (no hypercholesterolemia effect). If it substitutes the saturated fats, it lowers LDL; and provides nutrients to help develop maintain your body's cells.
- Polyunsaturated fatty acids: The body lacks enzymes to synthesize omega 3 and 6 (essential fatty acids). These are found in oils, nuts and seeds, soybean oil, corn oil and sunflower oil, as well as oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, herring and trout. Polyunsaturated fats can help reduce the cholesterol levels in your blood and lower your risk of heart disease and have a crucial role in brain function.

### Requirements

- Total fat intake should not exceed 33% of total energy from food (excluding alcohol).
- Intake of saturated fats should not exceed 10% of energy intake.
- Intake of monounsaturated should provide about 12%.
- Intake of unsaturated fatty acids should provide 6% to be made up of mixture of n-6 and n-3 fatty acids.

- Trans fatty acids should not exceed 2% of dietary energy or more than 5g per day.

### **Trans Fats**

- Trans fats are created in an industrial process which adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid.
- Companies like using trans fats in their foods because they're easy to use, inexpensive to produce, last a long time and have a nice taste.
- Trans fats raise your bad (LDL) cholesterol levels and lower your good (HDL) cholesterol levels. Eating trans fats increases your risk of developing heart disease and stroke. It's also associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Trans fats can be found in many foods - but especially in fried foods like French fries and doughnuts, and baked goods including pastries, pies, biscuits and pizza.
- You can determine the amount of *trans* fats in a particular packaged food by looking at the Nutrition Facts panel. You can also spot *trans* fats by reading ingredient lists and looking for the ingredients referred to as 'partially hydrogenated oils'.

### **Dietetic tips on how to reduce fat intake in diet**

- Choose lean cuts of meat and trim off any visible fat.
- Choose low fat, polyunsaturated or monounsaturated spread instead of butter.
- Measure oil for cooking with tablespoons rather than pouring it from the container
- Avoid additional fat to foods, e.g. glazing vegetables.
- Use Quorn, quark, tofu or falafel as an alternative to meat products.
- Grill, bake, boil, poach, microwave or steam instead of frying wherever possible or roast so you don't need to add any extra fat.
- Choose lower fat versions of dairy foods whenever you can, such as semi- skimmed or skimmed milk, reduced-fat yoghurt and low fat cheeses.
- Avoid processed foods and hidden fats in pies, pastries, quiche, Yorkshire puddings, sausage rolls, cakes, biscuits and crisps.
- Mix salads with low calorie salad dressing rather than mayonnaise or dressing on sandwiches and salads.