

Nutrition Bites

Nutrition Bite Week 5 - Fat

This week we take a closer look at fat.

A small amount of fat is essential for health. Fats help us to absorb the fat soluble vitamins A, D and E from the food we eat, and healthy fats are needed to make healthy cell membranes and prostaglandins which are hormone-like substances. Fatty foods are high in calories and most of us need to watch the total amount and the type of fat we eat.

As fat has more than twice the number of calories as carbohydrates or proteins, it's very easy to eat a lot of calories in a relatively small amount of food.

It's important to focus on eating *the right type* of fat for your overall health and activity. This means choosing less saturated and trans fatty acids and more poly and mono-unsaturated fats. Eating too much fat can raise your cholesterol and cause you to put on weight.

Types of fat

Saturated Fat

Saturated fat is also known as the bad type of fat. These fats are found mostly as hard fats that come from animal sources. They are also found in some processed foods. In excess, saturated fat encourages your body to produce 'bad' LDL cholesterol, which increases your risk of heart disease and stroke. Saturated fat is also associated with certain types of cancer.

Trans Fats

Trans fats are even worse than saturated fat! They raise your 'bad' LDL cholesterol and lower your 'good' HDL cholesterol and therefore increase your risk of heart disease. These fats are often called hydrogenated fats and are found in processed foods such as cakes, confectionary, biscuits, butter, ready meals. Check the food label for hydrogenated fat or hydrogenated vegetable oils.

Unsaturated Fats

Unsaturated fats are better for your heart and as part of a healthy diet can help lower your cholesterol, if taken in small amounts. Unsaturated fats usually come from vegetable sources and are divided into monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.

Omega 3 Fatty Acids

Omega 3 fatty acids are a type of polyunsaturated fat. They are a type of beneficial fat that can protect your heart. Omega 3 fatty acids can help lower cholesterol and maintain healthy joints. Oily fish is the best source of omega 3 fatty acids. Types of oily fish are salmon, trout, mackerel, herring, sardines, kippers and fresh tuna. Fresh, frozen and tinned varieties are all suitable, but try to go for fish tinned in tomato sauce or brine (drain brine thoroughly). Omega 3's can also be found in plant foods such as rapeseed, walnuts, soya, dark green leafy vegetables, flax and linseed but only in small amounts. It is recommended that all we all eat 2 portions of fish a week, and one of these should be oily fish. Anyone who has received medical advice from their doctor about high cholesterol should aim for 2 portions of oily fish a week.

Look at the table below for more details on which types of fat are found in different foods.

Foods high in saturated fat (raise cholesterol)	Foods high in trans fats (raise cholesterol)	Foods high in unsaturated fats (lower cholesterol)
<p><u>Meat and meat products:</u> Fat on meat, skin on chicken, fatty bacon, sausages, sausage rolls, fatty meats, burgers, meat pies and pastries, luncheon meat, corned beef, salami, pudding, pate, duck</p> <p><u>Dairy products:</u> Full fat milk, cheese, yoghurts and foods made from these</p> <p><u>Confectionary:</u> Chocolate, biscuits, cakes, savoury snacks, toffee, dessert, cream, ice cream</p> <p><u>Spreads and oils:</u> Butter, lard, coconut oil, palm oil and foods fried in these oils e.g. chips, takeaways</p> <p><u>Sauces and dressings:</u> Cream or cheese based sauces, mayonnaise, coleslaw, salad cream, salad dressings</p>	<p>Hard margarines</p> <p><u>Confectionary:</u> Cakes, biscuits, pies, pastries, crisps, savoury snacks, desserts, chocolate, doughnuts</p> <p>Ready made meals</p> <p>Chips</p>	<p><u>Oils:</u> Monounsaturated oils e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, peanut oil, groundnut oil and spreads made from these oils</p> <p><u>Polyunsaturated oils</u> e.g. sunflower oil, soya bean oil, sesame oil, corn oil, linseed oil, grape seed oil, safflower oil and spreads made from these oils</p> <p><u>Fish:</u> Oily fish contains polyunsaturated oils</p> <p><u>Nuts and seeds:</u> Unsalted cashew nuts, walnuts, brazil nuts, hazelnuts, almonds, pine nuts, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds. Remember although nuts contain the good type of fat, they still contain calories so limit your portion to a small handful.</p> <p>Avocados are a source of monounsaturated oils.</p>

Like everyone, runners and walkers of the 10 mile race will benefit from cutting down on their total fat intake. It's easy to cut down on the obvious fats such as butter, margarine, the fat on meat, the skin on chicken, cream and the oil you use when cooking. However much of the fat we eat is hidden in foods such as biscuits, cakes, sauces, snacks and fast foods, so aim to limit these foods.

Change this fat.....For this one!

High fat foods	Lower fat options e.g. low fat dressings, mayonnaise, low fat dairy etc.
Butter	Monounsaturated spreads such as olive oil spreads e.g. Low Low, Olivio, Golden Olive, Flora Light.
Margarine/butter in white sauce	Blend 1 heaped tbsp cornflour with ½ pint of milk
Cream	Low fat Greek yoghurt, half fat crème fraiche
Cheddar cheese	Smaller quantity of strong flavoured cheese - for toppings use half grated cheese and half breadcrumbs or oats. Or substitute cheddar cheese with cottage cheese or philadelphia, which are lower in fat options.
Cream cheese	Ricotta cheese or quark (blend with a little sugar and vanilla essence in sweet desserts)
Fatty meats e.g. sausages, burgers, pastries, pies	Lean meat, and remove all visible fat
Chocolate, biscuits, cakes etc.	Fruit, plain popcorn, plain biscuit, wholegrain cracker.

Tip: Remember all types of fat contain calories and will cause weight gain if eaten in excess. Try to eat unsaturated fat in small amounts, and instead of saturated fat, to help keep your heart healthy and manage your weight.

Next week we discuss the importance of Vitamin and Minerals in your eating plan. Please join us again for more nutrition tips. Happy training!

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