

FitFacts®



The Skinny on Fat

DID YOU KNOW THAT **NOT ALL FATS ARE BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH?** IN FACT, SOME FATS ARE REALLY GOOD FOR YOU! WHILE ALL FATS ARE ENERGY-DENSE (A WHOPPING 9 CALORIES PER GRAM COMPARED TO JUST 4 CALORIES PER GRAM FOR CARBOHYDRATES AND PROTEINS) AND THUS SHOULD BE CONSUMED IN SMALL PORTIONS, INCORPORATING MORE OF THE “HEALTHY” FATS AND LESS OF THE “UNHEALTHY” FATS IN YOUR DIET WILL HELP YOU OPTIMIZE HEALTH. HERE IS A BREAKDOWN OF THE VARIOUS FATS AND HOW MUCH TO EAT ACCORDING TO THE 2010 DIETARY GUIDELINES FOR AMERICANS.

Fats to decrease are the fats that clog up the arteries and increase the risk for heart disease and diabetes. These are usually solid at room temperature. These included saturated fat and trans fat.

- **Saturated fat** is usually from animal sources.
 - *How much:* less than 7-10% of your calories for the day (this is 15-22 grams for a 2000 calorie diet)
 - *Sources:* high fat dairy products and meats, poultry skin, butter/lard, gravy, coconut oil, palm oil

While the latest research suggests that saturated fat isn't as bad for us as was once thought, it is still a less healthy option than the “healthy” fats described below.

- **Trans fat** is even worse than saturated fat! Even foods labeled “trans fat free” may have a small amount. Stay away from foods with “hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” oils on the ingredient list.
 - *How much:* As little as possible.
 - *Sources:* snack crackers, chips, baked goods, shortening, fried foods.

Healthy fats help increase HDL (good) cholesterol in the blood, which helps remove build-up of LDL (bad) cholesterol in the arteries. More HDL and less LDL promote heart health.

- **Mono-unsaturated fat**
 - *How much:* No set limit. Use these to replace saturated and trans fat and use in moderation.
 - *Sources:* olive, canola, and peanut oils, avocado, olives, nuts and seeds
- Two types of **poly-unsaturated fats** include omega 3 and omega 6 fats.
 - **Omega 3 fats** come in 3 forms: EPA, DHA, and ALA. EPA and DHA have the most research to support their role in preventing heart disease.
 - *How much:* Eat fish twice a week. Use other sources in moderation.
 - *Sources:* EPA and DHA come from egg yolks (depending on the chicken feed) and cold-water fish and shellfish such as tuna, salmon, mackerel,

herring, trout, cod, crab, shrimp, and oysters. ALA comes from plant sources such as walnuts, flaxseed, canola, and soybean oils.

- **Omega 6 fats** also prevent heart disease but too much may lead to inflammation and blood clotting.
- *How much:* 5-10% of calories per day (about 12 g/day for women and 17g/day for men)
- *Sources:* flaxseed, canola, and soybean oils

Total Fat intake should be no more than 20-35% of your total calories for the day.* Most of these fats should be from the good/healthy category above. Since fat has more calories per gram than carbohydrates or protein, even healthy fats should be consumed in moderation.

*To figure your fat requirement—multiply your daily calorie total by the % fat you desire. Divide that number by 9. (i.e. the total fat intake for a person on a 2000 calorie diet aiming for 20% fat would be $2000 \times 0.20 = 400$. $400/9 = 44$ grams of fat)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[American Council on Exercise](#)

[U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)