

# Fats the Facts

Fat is an essential part of a healthy, balanced diet.

Essential for: Energy- functioning of the body – hormone balance - insulation - protects major organs - absorption of fat soluble vitamins A, D, E, K – feeling satisfied and fuller for longer after eating – promotes weight maintenance.

All types of fat are high in energy, a gram of fat provides 9kcal of energy compared with 4kcal for carbohydrate and protein. Current Department of Health guidelines recommend that fat intake should not exceed 35% of total daily intake. UK recommendations for maximum total fat intake for adults is termed as Reference Intakes (RI):

- RI for average male on 2,500 kcals/day – 95g
- RI for average female on 2,000 kcals/day - 70g

All foods have a combination of saturated, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fat. UK health guidelines recommend eating less fat, in particular saturated fats, as high amounts can increase the risk of health conditions such as heart disease and obesity.

**SATURATED FATS** (Usually solid at room temperature) A maximum of 11% of daily intake (kcal) should come from saturated fat.

- RI for average man should be no more than 30g a day
- RI for average woman should be no more than 20g a day

Saturated fats are found:

- Meat products, including sausages and pies
- Butter, ghee, lard
- Cheese, cream, ice cream
- Snacks, confectionary, biscuits, cakes, pastries
- Palm oil, coconut oil

Food	Saturated fat	% Reference Intake for 2,000 kcal/day
40g cheddar cheese	8.7g	43.5%
18g chocolate digestive	2.2g	11%
100g Grilled beef burger	10.9g	55%

Update on coconut oil - Although about 86% saturated fat, studies are ongoing to the benefits of certain fats, such as fat found in coconut oil, that they may have more health benefits than other saturated fats. Current government guidelines state there is not enough research to give a definite answer, although there is no problem including it as part of balanced diet within daily saturated fat allowance.

### TRANS FATS

Increase the risk of heart disease and are not included as part of a healthy diet and should therefore be avoided. Trans fats have mostly been removed from UK food. Guidelines advise less than 2% of daily intake should come from trans fats (maximum 5g/day). Trans fats are found:

- Naturally in dairy foods and meats (small amounts)
- Processed foods, ready meals, take-away, deep fried foods
- Biscuits cakes, pastries
- Watch out for trans fats or partially hydrogenated vegetable fat/oil on the ingredients list.

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### UNSATURATED FATS

(Usually liquid at room temperature)

Can be either polyunsaturated or monounsaturated with both having positive effects on health, promoting healthy cholesterol levels.

### MONOUNSATURATED

Help protect the heart by reducing the bad cholesterol (LDL) and maintaining the good cholesterol (HDL).

- Olive oil, rapeseed and their spreads
- Avocados
- Some nuts, such as almonds, brazils, peanuts

### POLYUNSATURATED

Include omega 3 and 6 fats. These are classed as 'essential' fats as cannot be made in the body so need to be sourced from our diet. They raise good cholesterol as well as lower bad cholesterol, prevent blood clotting and enhance brain development.

#### Omega 3:

- Oily fish, including mackerel, kippers, herring, trout, sardines, salmon, fresh tuna
- Flaxseed (linseed), sunflower oil, walnuts

#### Omega 6:

- Sunflower, corn, safflower, soya bean and their spreads

## TIPS ON EATING LESS FAT .....

- Compare food labels, opt for foods lower in fat but watch out for added sugar
- Aim to eat two portions of fish a week, at least one coming from oily fish
- Choose foods with mono and polyunsaturated fats
- Choose lean cuts of meat, trim visible fat, take skin off
- Grill, bake, poach, steam rather than deep frying or roasting
- Measure or spray oil rather than pouring straight from container
- Add extra veg and reduce meat in casseroles, stews and curries

Try to limit fat by opting for foods naturally low in fat rather than processed foods that have been made to be lower fat options. Sugar is often added to processed foods to keep the flavour and can equal the same amount of calories as the regular option.

## Did you know!

A food product has to contain 30% less fat than a similar product to be labelled as lower fat, reduced fat, light or lite, but that doesn't mean it will be a low fat food as may still contain 17.5g or more fat per 100g.

For more info on fats visit [NHS choices](#)/ [The British Heart Foundation](#)/ [British Nutrition Foundation](#).