

Fat is not all bad! In fact, fat from food is very helpful. It is needed to absorb and transport vitamins A, D, E, and K; to provide energy, and to keep your brain and nerves working. Stored fat protects your organs and bones, maintains body heat, and provides an energy reserve.

Fat adds flavor and aroma to food, which is why fat-containing foods taste so good. It also helps satisfy hunger by making you feel full. However, there are types of fats that should be limited: saturated fat and trans fat. Too much of these in the diet can clog blood vessels and increase the risk of heart disease. A high fat diet is also linked to diabetes, obesity and cancer.

Heart disease is much more common in people with diabetes. Certain fats can increase the level of cholesterol in the blood...and the risk for heart disease. Fats found in foods are not all the same. Both the type and amount of fat contribute to heart disease.

Eating fewer of these foods can help reduce your intake of 'bad' fats:

Saturated fat

- Meat
- Poultry skin
- Whole milk, cream
- Ice cream
- Butter
- Palm, Coconut oils

Trans fat

- Fried foods
- Shortening
- Stick margarine
- Foods made with hydrogenated oils
- Lard

Cholesterol

- Found only in animal foods*
- Fatty meat
 - Whole milk, cheese
 - Eggs
 - Lobster, crab

To help prevent heart disease, focus on getting more of your fat from unsaturated sources: polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats. These help to keep total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol levels down. In general, nuts, vegetable oils, and fish are good sources. To avoid excess calories, substitute unsaturated fats for saturated ones rather than adding fats to your diet.

Focus on getting more of your fat from these sources:

Monounsaturated Fat

- Cashews, almonds, peanuts
- Flaxseeds, flaxseed oil
- Olives, olive oil
- Canola and peanut oils
- Avocado

Polyunsaturated Fat

- Safflower, soybean, corn, sesame oils
- Fish (trout, herring, and salmon)
- Walnuts
- Sesame seeds

Gone Fishing

The American Heart Association recommends eating fish (particularly fatty fish) at least two times a week. Fish is a good source of protein and healthy unsaturated fats. Fish is also a source of omega-3 fatty acids, which benefit the heart of healthy people and those at risk for or who have cardiovascular disease.

Tips for Eating Quality Seafood on a Budget

1. Try canned versions. It's not just tuna; you can find canned salmon too.
2. You may get a better deal by purchasing frozen.
3. Try premade, non-breaded patties that are sold fresh or frozen.

Label Reading: Fat Content

Label	What does it mean?
Fat free	Less than 0.5 grams of fat per serving
Low fat	3 grams or less of fat per serving
Reduced or less fat	25% less fat per serving than full fat product
Lean (meat)	Less than 10 grams of fat per serving, 4.5 grams or less saturated fat, and less than 95 mg of cholesterol per serving
Extra lean (meat)	Less than 5 grams of fat per serving, less than 2 grams of saturated fat, and less than 95 mg of cholesterol

Tips for Managing Fat

- Drain the fat from ground beef; take the skin off poultry; buy lean meat
- Use low- or non-fat dairy products
- Replace ice cream with frozen low fat yogurt
- Prepare vegetables with fat-free cooking methods: steam, bake, grill

Fat Replacers

Fat Replacers were created to add the desired qualities of fat to food without actually adding fat. There are several fat replacers on the market. Some of which are made from carbohydrate, so they may not be a good choice for people with diabetes. Be sure to read food labels carefully.

A Few Common Fat Replacers:

Plant stanols and sterols

Maltodextrin: This adds extra carbohydrate to food, so read labels carefully for diabetes management.

Olestra: Eating an excessive amount of olestra may cause diarrhea.