

What Does Fat Do?

Fat is one of the three main building blocks of food, along with carbohydrate and protein. You need some fat in your diet—but not too much.

- Fat from food helps your body make new cells and tissues. Your body also needs fat to absorb certain vitamins.
- Fat has more calories than carbohydrates or protein (1 gram fat = 9 calories; 1 gram protein or carbohydrate = 4 calories).

What Types of Fats Are in Food?

Unsaturated fats are healthy fats. Types include monounsaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats, and omega-3 fats.

- These fats do not increase cholesterol or triglyceride levels in the blood. Some types, such as omega-3 fats, may actually lower your triglycerides.
- Omega-3 fats may prevent heart disease and provide other health benefits.
- **Choose** unsaturated fats instead of the unhealthy types.

Saturated fats and **trans fats** are unhealthy fats.

- These fats increase cholesterol and triglyceride levels. This puts you at greater risk of heart attack or stroke.
- **Limit** these unhealthy fats.

Tips for Choosing Healthy (Unsaturated) Fats

- Snack on a handful of nuts or sunflower seeds.
- Use olives and avocado in salads and sandwiches.
- Try different nut butters (such as cashew or almond butter) in sandwiches
- To get more omega-3 fats:
 - Eat fish at least twice a week.
 - Try flax-fortified cereals and breads.
 - Add ground flaxseed to baked goods, cereals, soups, and salads.

Which Foods have Healthy (Unsaturated) Fats?

Monounsaturated Fats:

- Some vegetable oils, including olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, sunflower oil, and sesame oil
- Avocados
- Olives
- Nut butters, such as peanut butter
- Many nuts and seeds, such as macadamia nuts, pecans, and almonds

Polyunsaturated Fats:

- Some vegetable oils, including soybean oil, corn oil, and safflower oil
- Fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel, herring, and trout
- Some nuts and seeds, such as walnuts and sunflower seeds

Omega-3 Fats:

- Oily fish
- Flax seeds and flaxseed oil
- Walnuts and walnut oil
- Canola oil



Tips for Getting Less Saturated and *Trans* Fats

Avoid ...	Choose instead ...
75% lean ground beef (75% lean means it is 25% fat)	> 90% lean ground beef or ground skinless chicken or turkey breast
Marbled, high-fat meats (such as prime cuts)	Leaner cuts: round, loin, sirloin, or chuck
Pork bacon	Low-fat bacon, turkey bacon, ham, or Canadian bacon
Fried chicken	Skinless chicken
Beef or pork hot dogs, Polish sausage, bratwurst	Low-fat hot dogs, turkey franks, tofu- or soy-based franks
Pizza with pepperoni, sausage, or extra	Pizza with Canadian bacon, low-fat ground beef, or vegetables
Sandwiches with bologna, salami, pastrami, or corned beef	Sandwiches with turkey, chicken, boiled lean roast beef, peanut butter, or other nut butters
Regular mayonnaise	Reduced-fat mayonnaise or mustard
Whole milk, 2% milk, whole chocolate milk	Fat-free (skim) or 1% milk; reduced-fat chocolate milk
Whole milk yogurt or sour cream	Fat-free or reduced-fat yogurt; low-fat sour cream
Regular cheese	Fat-free or reduced-fat cheese
Pasta with alfredo or cream sauce	Pasta with marinara sauce
Butter, stick margarine, lard, shortening	Plant stanol spreads, yogurt-based spreads, reduced-fat soft or liquid margarines
Cream in cooking	Low-fat milk or yogurt
Cream-based salad dressings	Reduced-fat salad dressings; vinegar and oil dressings
Tartar sauce	Lemon juice
Packaged cookies, cakes, and crackers	Low-fat snacks; homemade baked goods made with oils instead of butter or margarine

