Facts About Fats

What Are Fats?

Fats are essential nutrients your body needs to function correctly. They give you energy, help your body absorb vitamins, support cell growth, make you feel full, and provide flavor to foods. Not all fats are created equal, however. Let's dive deeper into fats.

Fats Are One Of Three Macronutrients

Fats provide more calories than proteins and carbohydrates. Calories are fuel for our bodies. Each gram of fat contains 9 calories, whereas each gram of protein or carbohydrate provides 4 calories.

Types Of Fats

- **Saturated Fats**
  - Where to find them: Found mostly in animal products such as meat, butter, and cheese. They're also found in tropical oils like coconut and palm oil.
  - Health effects: Eating too much saturated fat can raise your cholesterol levels, which may increase your risk for heart disease.

- **Unsaturated Fats**
  - Where to find them: Found mainly in plants and fish. There are two types of unsaturated fats: monounsaturated and polyunsaturated.

- **Monounsaturated Fats**
  - Health effects: Can help reduce "bad cholesterol" levels in your blood, which lowers your risk of heart disease and stroke.
  - Examples: Olive oil, avocados, and nuts (almonds, peanuts, etc).
- **Polyunsaturated Fats (Omega-3 and Omega-6 Fatty Acids)**
  - Health effects: Omega-3 fatty acids help lower triglycerides and are essential to us as our body cannot create these on our own. Omega-6 fatty acids consumed in moderation and with a ratio of more omega-3 vs. omega-6 fatty acids can also be beneficial for heart and circulation health.
  - Examples: Omega-3 FAs (walnuts, flaxseed, chia seeds, salmon, sardines, cod). Omega-6 FAs (safflower oil, sunflower oil, vegetable oil, and nuts).
- **Partially Hydrogenated Fats / Trans Fats**

- Where to find them: margarine, fried foods, processed snacks, and baked goods such as cookies and pastries.
- Health effects: raise “bad cholesterol” levels and lowers “good cholesterol” levels which increases your risk of heart disease and other health problems.

Quick Tips

Fats are a crucial part of a healthy diet. Eating the right kinds of fats in moderation can help maintain good health. Aim to replace saturated fats with unsaturated fats while avoiding trans fats for best health benefits! Try some of the tips below.

- Limit saturated fats: choose lean meats and low-fat or fat-free dairy options.
- Cooking with oil: use oils like olive, canola, or peanut oil when cooking. Be mindful of their “smoke points.”
- Eat fish: aim to consume fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids at least twice per week.
- Snack smart: Choose nuts and seeds over cookies or chips.
- Read food labels: information about the amount and types of fat can be found on nutrient labels; be on the lookout!