



Fat



Fat in the diet :

- ◆ Provides flavor to food,
- ◆ Gives us a sense of fullness in our stomachs
- ◆ Helps carry certain vitamins around in the bloodstream.

Fat on our bodies:

- ◆ provides insulation to keep us warm
- ◆ protects our internal organs like the heart, lungs and reproductive organs
- ◆ is a source of stored energy

What we *don't* need is too much fat, either in our diet or on our bodies. Excess fat in the diet can contribute to obesity (excess body fat) and can increase the risk of developing heart disease and certain kinds of cancer.

How much fat do we need?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend no more than 30% of total calories come from fat. So if you're eating about 2100 calories per day, you don't need more than 700 of those calories coming from fat. Since each gram of fat has 9 calories, that's about 78 grams of fat each day.

If your daily calorie intake is about:	You need no more than:
2200 calories/day	73 grams of fat/day
2500 calories/day	83 grams of fat/day
3000 calories/day	100 grams of fat/day

Keep in mind that these amounts are guidelines. On average, over the course of the week, your intake of fat should be at 30% of calories. There are days you may have a little more than recommended and days you may have a little less. This is perfectly normal.

How do you know how much fat is in food?

For the most part, if you follow the recommendations of the Food Guide Pyramid, it's probably not necessary to count grams of fat or calories from fat. However, food labels do tell you how many grams of fat are in a serving of the particular food.

What about saturated and unsaturated fat?

Fats can be either *saturated* or *unsaturated*. Saturated fats are usually hard at room temperature and include fatty meats, the skin and fat on poultry, high fat dairy products (cheese, whole milk, cream, butter, and full-fat ice cream), coconut oil, and lard.

Unsaturated fats tend to be liquid at room temperature. They include polyunsaturated fats such as vegetable oils (corn oil, safflower oil), nuts and some margarines. Unsaturated fats also include monounsaturated fats such as the fat in olives, olive oil, avocados and canola oil. Margarine, while made from vegetable sources, goes through a chemical process that results in a type of fat that *acts* like saturated fat. The best margarine choices are those made from corn or safflower oils.

The Dietary Guidelines recommend no more than 10% of your calories come from saturated fat. Food labels tell you how much saturated fat is in food.

What about cholesterol?

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in our blood and in body cells. We actually need cholesterol and use it to make some hormones and vitamin D. Cholesterol is found only in animal products like meats, organ meats (i.e. liver), eggs, milk, butter, and shellfish. If you eat excessive amounts of these foods, your body may make too much cholesterol. Too much cholesterol in the blood may increase your risk of developing heart disease. The Dietary Guidelines suggest we limit cholesterol in the diet. Some health professionals recommend eating no more than 300 mg/day of cholesterol. See the table below for some common cholesterol-containing foods.

Food Item	Cholesterol	Food Item	Cholesterol
3 ounces beef liver	331mg	8 ounces whole milk	31mg
1 whole egg	212mg	1/2 cup vanilla ice cream	25mg
4 ounces beef steak	76mg	1 teaspoon butter	10mg
3 small shrimp, boiled	32mg	8 ounces skim milk	9mg

Tips for choosing lower fat foods

If you think your diet may be too high in fat, there are some changes you can make. Eating from the base of the pyramid is a healthy approach.

- ◆ Most whole grains, breads, pastas and cereals are naturally low in fat.
- ◆ Fruits and vegetables, full of vitamins and fiber, contribute little fat to the diet.
- ◆ Choose lean meats, beans, and low-fat dairy products.
- ◆ Limit your intake of processed foods such as crackers, cookies, cakes and higher fat snacks.
- ◆ Go easy on the fast food.
- ◆ Check the label if you're unsure about the amount of fat in a particular food.
- ◆ When cooking - broil, bake, grill and roast instead of sauté or fry
- ◆ When shopping - learn the definitions of such terms as lowfat, lite (*see table below*)
- ◆ When eating out - look for broiled, baked, grilled or roasted menu items. Ask for reduced fat items or look for a healthy heart symbol. Choose low-fat salad dressings or have your dressing on the side so you can limit the amount you use.

Label Term	Definition
Fat free	A serving contains no or an insignificant amount of fat (less than 0.5 g)
Low fat	A serving contains no more than 3 grams of fat, no more than 1 gram saturated fat
Reduced fat	The product has been changed to have 25% less fat than the original product or reference product.
Light	The product has been changed to have at least 50% less fat than the original product or reference product
% fat free	A product must be low fat or fat-free and the percentage must accurately reflect the amount of fat in 100grams of the food.