



FACTSHEET

WHY YOU SHOULD NOT BE SCARED OF THE BIG BAD FATS!

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Fats

Fats have had a very bad press over the last 20 years, and this was loosely based on the thought process that 'eating fat made one fat'. Yes, fats are the most calorific food group at 9 calories per gram, but fats are also essential for many processes such as hormonal and neurotransmitter production. They also provide a source of essential fat soluble vitamins - A, D, E and K. We cannot survive without fats (though we can live without sugar!).

Saturated fats

These are found in red meat and dairy (butter, cheese and milk) and some plant oils such as palm oil. The current advice is to limit saturated fats to no more than 20g a day for women (about 4 tsp of butter) because of concern that excessive saturated fats raise cholesterol levels and can lead

to cardiovascular disease. The most recent research seems to indicate that saturated fats are not necessarily the cause of cardiovascular problems - it's all about the sugar!

While the battle rages, we suggest 'moderating' saturated fats and enjoying red meat 2-3 times a week, as well as moderate amounts of cheese (great source of calcium!) and other dairy products.

Note that coconut oil is particular type of saturated fat and has a unique structure which research suggests helps us to 'burn' or oxidise coconut fat quicker than other fats - ie studies link consumption of coconut oil with better weight control.



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Unsaturated fats

These are mainly found in plant foods. This family includes:

- Omega 6 - plant oils (sunflower and rapeseed) nuts and seeds
- Omega 3 - oily fish, nuts and seeds
- Omega 9 - olive oil and avocados (also known as monounsaturated fats)

Recent research suggests that excessive omega 6 intake is not good for us either as these fats can cause inflammation and possibly cardiovascular disease when consumed in excessive quantities.

There is however lots of research to support the health benefits of omega 3 and omega 9 and these should be consumed on a daily basis.

Trans, hydrogenated and oxidised Fats

These fats should be **avoided** like the plague' as there are lots of studies to link them with causing health problems such as inflammation and even cancer.

Trans and hydrogenated fat are found in baked and processed foods and formed from artificially creating solid oils from plant oils. Do check your labels carefully!

Oxidised fats are formed when oils are heated at too high a temperature. This damages the oil and changes its structure into compounds which impair the nutritional value of the food.

All this information can be summarised as follows:

- Enjoy saturated fats in moderation
- Avoid '**low fat**' products as these are usually high in sugar and fillers/bulkers. Eat smaller amounts of the 'real' food instead
- Eat omega 3 daily (in the form of nuts and seeds)
- Aim for 1-2 servings of oily fish per week
- Limit use of omega 6 plant oils - use olive oil for salad dressings instead
- Avoid trans and hydrogenated fats
- Limit fried foods and avoid overheating fats when cooking

Cook with butter or olive oil which are fairly resistant to heat. Use a lighter olive oil for cooking and save the extra virgin oil for salad dressings!

