



## NUTRI-BYTES

### “Fat is Bad”: Fact or Fiction

#### What are the latest recommendations on fat intake?

Have you ever been told, “Fat in your diet is bad”? If so, you may have the wrong impression of fat. All fats are not equal. Although saturated and trans fats have harmful effects on the body, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are associated with beneficial roles in the prevention and treatment of disease. Health experts currently recommend that Americans lower their total fat intake and perhaps more importantly, substitute saturated and trans fats with polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats.

In addition, researchers have discovered that the ratio between two polyunsaturated fats, linoleic acid and linolenic acid, may play a role in the development of serious medical conditions, such as arthritis, cancer, and heart disease. A healthy ratio of linoleic acid (an omega-6 fatty acid) to linolenic acid (an omega-3 fatty acid) is less than 10:1. The typical American diet has a ratio of about 20:1.

#### So how do you translate these recommendations into dietary changes?

Here are some specific ways to improve the fat content of your diet:

- Limit your intake of red meat, whole milk, cheese, & tropical oils (coconut & palm oils).
- Use only nonfat or low-fat milk and cheeses.
- Substitute soft, reduced-fat, or fat-free spreads for butter.
- Avoid high fat dressings and sauces (such as cheese or Alfredo) on your vegetables, salads, and pasta.
- Limit your intake of fried foods and processed foods, such as chips, crackers, & baked goods.
- Reduce your intake of corn, safflower, sunflower, and cottonseed oils.
- Increase your intake of fatty fish (salmon, albacore tuna, trout, herring & mackerel), flaxseed, & walnuts.
- Include a small portion of nuts and seeds in your diet.
- Add some avocados, olives, olive oil, and canola oil to your diet.
- Choose healthy snacks, such as baked chips, air-popped popcorn, or vegetables with low-fat dip.
- Try fresh fruit, nonfat yogurt, or low-fat cake rather than ice cream or cookies for dessert.

REMEMBER, reduced-fat products may not be reduced in calories! Read food labels for both calorie **and** fat content, so that you can manage your weight while reducing your fat intake. As always, moderation is essential to a healthy diet.



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