

FAT IN OUR FOOD

**CAN I
CONSUME
FATS
WITHOUT
GETTING FAT?**



The Truth About Fat in our food and why we need it.

Fats in our food

I grew up in an era where we were told “if we want to be healthy, lose weight or prevent heart disease then a diet low in fats (particularly saturated fats), was the way to go. Low-fat and no-fat foods were hailed as the healthy foods.

Unfortunately, much of the world has followed this advice, and instead of seeing the rate of heart disease, obesity etc decline, the opposite has been true. There has been a large rise in the rate of heart disease, obesity and chronic inflammation (leading to other diseases and cancers).

According to the British Journal of Medicine (2015) new research has now found that there is NO relationship between the amount of saturated fat we eat and the risk of heart disease, stroke, or diabetes.

IN fact, and **the World Health Organization, now recommend that 20 – 35% of our daily calorie intake, should be healthy fats.**

The next question, of course is;

what are HEALTHY FATS? And what foods do we find them in?

There are quite a few different kinds of fats (technically known as lipids). Fats and oils are the ones we hear about most. They are the saturated fats and the unsaturated fats.

Saturated fats

These fats are typically solid at room temperature. They naturally occur in many foods such as **meat (beef, lamb, pork, chicken, egg yolks etc), dairy products (butter, cream, cheese made from whole milk), and some plant based foods (coconut, coconut oil, cocoa butter etc).**

Our body can make saturated fats and this is a good thing, because we need them to survive. They provide 50% or more of our cells membranes, they help calcium grow in our bones, they protect the liver, help strengthen the immune system and they help our bodies utilize essential fatty acids.

Because our bodies can produce these types of fats, it is up to us if we think we benefit from eating them in our food or not.

Unsaturated fats

These fats come in two kinds. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated. Both of these fats are typically liquid at room temperature. And both of these fats are beneficial for our health.

- **Monounsaturated fats**

These fats have anti-inflammatory properties, high levels of antioxidant vitamin E and reduce our cholesterol levels. They are found in **olives and olive oil, Avocados and avocado oil, nuts (such as almonds, walnuts, peanuts etc) and also the oil from nuts.**

Our bodies can make monounsaturated fats, from saturated fats that we eat.

- **Polyunsaturated fats**

These fats are made up of two essential omega acids called **omega 3 and omega 6**. They are found in foods such as **salmon, trout, tuna, mackerel, sardines and anchovies. And also in some plant based foods such as leafy greens, seeds and nuts.**

Our bodies need both of these essential omega acids but cannot make them itself. Therefore, we have to eat them in our food.

Some of the benefits of omega 3 is that it reduces inflammation, supports cardiovascular health, is vital for good blood flow/pressure, supports brain health and supports our immune system, amongst other things.

Omega 6 is good for our health, when we don't eat too much of it. It can support a healthy skin, support our immune system and help us with joint pain.

There are however, side effects of eating too much omega 6 (particularly from unhealthy sources). This can include weight gain, blood clots, high blood pressure, low immune system, and psychological disorders.

For optimum health we should keep our omega 6 and omega 3 essential fatty acids in balance. We should have around the same amount of each.

Good sources of omega 6 are **olives, black current oil, and seeds (including flaxseeds, chia, sesame hemp and wheat germ)**. Unhealthy sources of Omega 6 are foods such as processed vegetable oils such as sunflower, soybean, safflower oils. Margarine. Grain feed animal meats. And processed foods in general.

Trans fats

The other fat we hear a lot about are trans fats.

Interestingly there are two types of trans fats. One occurs naturally in dairy, beef and lamb products. This one is harmless and can be eaten without worry.

The other trans fat is a manufactured fat that is very unhealthy for us to consume. Put simply, these are fats that have been processed in a way that takes liquid vegetable oil and turn it into a solid fat substance. They are found in many processed, fried foods and baked foods, such as pastries, pizza dough, pie crusts, biscuits, energy health bars, salad dressings and crackers. The main reason they are used, is to extend the shelf life of a product, and to improve taste. The problem with these types of trans fats is that our body absorbs the fake fat into our cell membranes just like healthy fats. However, instead of making the membrane of our cells stiff and stable, like the cholesterol from healthy fats, our cell membrane becomes soft and flabby. These artificial trans fats are thought to increase the risk of heart disease.

How do we know if a food has trans fats in it? Look on the label. If it says it contains "partially hydrogenated" or "partially hydrogenated oils" on the ingredients list, then it contains trans fats.

Now that we have some idea what healthy fats are, lets look at some of the reasons our body needs fat.

5 examples of the way our body needs and uses fat.

1. Fat is our bodies basic building block. The membranes, or walls, of the human body cells are made from fat. These means that fat is essential for us to live.
2. Vitamins A,D,E,& k cannot be used by our bodies without fat. These Fat soluble vitamins dissolve into the fat molecules and can then enter the intestine, and into the bloodstream and then to the liver where they are stored. Without fat, this process cannot happen.
3. Polyunsaturated fats can lower bad cholesterol levels and therefore support good heart health. One study has shown that taking omega 3 can reduce cardiac death by up to 50%.
4. **For those of us wanting to lose weight, the hormone leptin is produced by fat cells. Leptin is a hormone that reduces a person's appetite by acting on specific centres in the brain that reduce the urge to eat. Therefore, including fat in our diet can help reduce hunger, which will probably reduce calorie intake and this could lead to weight loss.**
5. Brain health – 60% of our brain is actually fat. Our brain needs good saturated fat and the essential fatty acid, omega 3 so that it can develop properly, and function at it's full potential. This is because fat is the essential building block for our brain cells. It is important for memory and learning among other things.

Too much omega 6, on the other hand, can cause things like memory loss, mood swings and depression.

Cholesterol

So where does **cholesterol** come in all of this.

For a start, research is showing that cholesterol is not a major indicator of heart disease or heart attack. Lifestyle is of more influence. Stress, smoking, over drinking alcohol, lack of exercise, obesity and a diet high in refined and processed carbohydrates are more likely to cause heart disease or heart attack.


Our body produces cholesterol in the liver and in fact cholesterol has a lot of important roles in our bodies. It makes up the membranes of all of our cells. 20% of the fat in the human brain is cholesterol. It has many functions such as regulating serotonin. Many hormones are derived from cholesterol. To name just a few of the things cholesterol is responsible for.

It is true that when we consume a lot of saturated fat, cholesterol levels will increase. It is also true that our cholesterol levels can rise, even if we are eating a healthy diet.

In conclusion, there are healthy fats in some foods and not so healthy fats in others. Our body can work at it's optimum level if we consume somewhere between 20 and 35% of the calories we eat, in the form of healthy fats and limit the amount of unhealthy fats that we eat.

Below are examples of unhealthy trans- fats and how you can recognise them in food labels

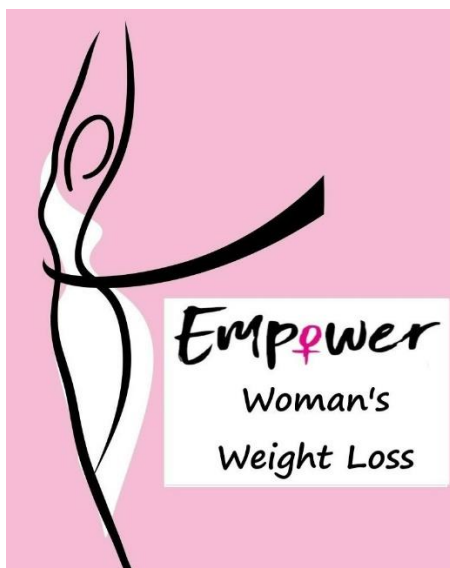
Ingredients: UNBLEACHED ENRICHED FLOUR (WHEAT FLOUR, NIACIN, REDUCED IRON, THIAMINE MONONITRATE {VITAMIN B1}, RIBOFLAVIN {VITAMIN B2}, FOLIC ACID), SOYBEAN OIL, SUGAR, **PARTIALLY HYDROGENATED COTTONSEED OIL**, SALT, LEAVENING (BAKING SODA AND/OR CALCIUM PHOSPHATE), HIGH FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP, SOY LECITHIN, MALTED BARLEY ...



Nutrition Facts	Amount/Serving	%DV*	Amount/Serving	%DV*
	Serv. Size 4 cookies (32g) Servings 9 Calories 150 Calories from fat 60	Total Fat 7g	11%	Total Carb. 20g
	Sat. Fat 4.5g	23%	Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
	Trans Fat 0g		Sugars 10g	
	Cholest. 0mg	0%	Protein 2g	
	Sodium 115mg	5%		
	Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 0% • Calcium 0% • Iron 4%			

INGREDIENTS: Enriched flour, riboflavin, sugar, **partially hydrogenated vegetable oil**, cocoa, cornstarch, **hydrogenated oils**, soy lecithin, salt, caramel color, artificial flavors.

(Copied from the nutrition institute)



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