

Fact Sheet

Nutrition: Types of Fat

The body needs an adequate amount of fat intake because fats provide energy, protect the organs, support cell growth, and are needed to absorb some vitamins (Harvard Health, 2021). However, some are more harmful to the body than others. Understanding the difference between healthy and unhealthy fats helps people make better choices to include fat in the diet.

Types of Fat

- Polyunsaturated fat
- Monounsaturated fat
- Saturated fat
- Trans fat

Harmful Fats

Saturated fat

- Found mainly in foods from animals, such as red meats, beef, pork, and poultry
- Found in tropical oils such as kernel and coconut oils, butter, plants, nuts

Trans fat

- May be found in small amounts in some foods
- Most are created through partial hydrogenation, when hydrogen is added to vegetable oils to make the fat more solid, less likely to spoil, and easier to use

Healthier Fats

Monounsaturated fat

- Found in most nuts, including peanut butter
- Found in avocados and oils made from olives, canola, peanut, and safflower
- Found in the fat of chicken, pork, beef, and game animals

Polyunsaturated fat

- Found mostly in plants and oils made from corn, sunflower, soybean, and cottonseed
- Found in walnuts, pine nuts, sesame, sunflower, pumpkin, and flax seeds
- Omega-3 fatty acids – a type of polyunsaturated fat found in salmon, trout, herring, sardines, and mackerel

How much dietary fat should be consumed each day?

- The most recent dietary guidelines avoid suggesting a specific amount of fat.

- Current emphasis is on keeping saturated fat consumption to less than 10% of daily total calories.

References:

Harvard Health. (2021, April 19). Know the facts about fats. Retrieved on February 20, 2023, from <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/know-the-facts-about-fats>

Mayo Clinic. (2023, February 15). Nutrition and healthy eating Dietary fat: Know which to choose. Retrieved on February 18, 2023, from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/fat/art-20045550>

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