

Dietary Fats

Did you know that the type of fat you eat is more important than the total amount of fat in your diet? Eat foods rich in plant and fish oils and low in fats from animal sources and trans fats. This can reduce your risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Making simple changes in your food habits can make a big difference in your health.

Unsaturated fats – “The Good”

What: Oils found in plants and fish such as olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, and sunflower oil

Where: Fish, nuts, seeds, peanut and other nut butters

Function: These fats help reduce the risk of high blood cholesterol. Eat more of these!



Saturated Fats – “The Bad”

What: Fats found mostly in animal foods

Where: Whole milk, cheese, butter, ice cream, red meat, sour cream, lard, coconut and palm oils

Function: Raise levels of total blood cholesterol and LDL “bad” cholesterol. Eat low or non-fat dairy and lean cuts of meat



Trans Fats – “The Ugly”

What: Vegetable oils that are chemically changed to increase the shelf life of processed foods

Where: Fast foods, packaged snacks (cookies, crackers, etc.), baked goods, and stick margarines

Function: Trans-fat raises your LDL “bad” cholesterol and lowers your HDL “good” cholesterol. Avoid these.



Tips for making changes at home

- Read food labels to select foods with NO trans-fat. Avoid foods with “partially hydrogenated vegetable oil” or “shortening” in the ingredients list.
- Limit fast food meals to once per week.
- Replace red meat with fish, chicken, nuts, and seeds at mealtimes.
- Cook with liquid oils and trans-fat-free tub margarine, instead of butter, stick margarine, or lard.
- Select dairy products made with low fat (1% or 2% milk) instead of whole milk