



# A Closer Look at the Foods We Eat

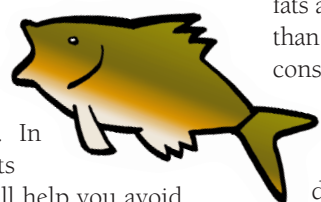
## March is National Nutrition Month

### A closer look at FATS....

According to the Dietary Guidelines, your fat intake should be kept between 20 to 35 % of total calories. Fat plays an important role in a healthy diet by supplying the body with essential fatty acids and serving as a carrier for the absorption of the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids. Fat also plays a key role in numerous biological functions.

Not all fats are created equal, however, and it is important to understand what makes some better for us than others.

In general, avoiding a high intake of fats (greater than 35% of total calories) will help you avoid consuming excess calories and will reduce your risk for unhealthy blood lipid levels.



### What makes some fats better for you than others?

Some fats increase low-density lipoprotein (LDL) levels. LDL carries cholesterol from the liver to the rest of the body. When there is too much LDL cholesterol in the blood, cholesterol can be deposited on the walls of the coronary arteries. Because saturated fats and *trans* fats raise LDL levels, it is recommended that less than 10% of calories come from saturated fats and that *trans* fat consumption be kept as low as possible. In addition, cholesterol consumption should be kept to less than 300 mg/day.

Some fats can improve blood cholesterol levels. Most dietary fats should come from polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats, which reduce LDL cholesterol levels when they replace saturated fats in the diet. Omega-3 and Omega-6 polyunsaturated fatty acids are thought to be particularly beneficial. These essential fatty acids are not made by the body and exhibit cardioprotective effects.

Type of Fat	Dietary Source	Effect on Cholesterol	How Often to Choose
<b>Trans Fat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Hydrogenated” or “partially hydrogenated” oils</li> <li>• Vegetable shortenings, stick margarine, deep fried foods, some fast foods and snack foods (i.e. cookies and crackers)</li> </ul>	Raises LDL	Less often
<b>Saturated Fat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tropical oils such as palm and coconut oils, cocoa butter, coconuts and coconut milk</li> <li>• Red meat, the skin from chicken and other birds, butter, whole milk and milk products (i.e. cheese and ice cream)</li> </ul>	Raises LDL	Less often
<b>Monounsaturated Fat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avocados, olives, certain nuts</li> <li>• Olive, canola, and peanut oils</li> </ul>	Lowers LDL when substituted for saturated fat	More often
<b>Polyunsaturated Fat</b> (includes omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plant oils like corn, sunflower, and safflower</li> <li>• Fish* (especially salmon, trout, and herring)</li> <li>• Flaxseed oil</li> </ul>	Lowers LDL when substituted for saturated fat	More often

\* Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children should avoid fish with high levels of mercury.

### A closer look at FRUITS and VEGETABLES...

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a balanced diet because most provide a rich source of fiber and micronutrients and are generally low in calories and fat. If you are following a 2000-calorie diet, the Dietary Guidelines recommend consuming four and one-half cups per day. Not all selections have to be consumed as fresh produce, so consider canned, frozen, and dried options to help meet your daily requirements. Since there are so many different types of fruits and vegetables, and because they do not have the same array of nutrients, eating a wide variety is beneficial. Some of the key nutrients found in this food group include vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium, and folate. The list below highlights some of the particular fruits and vegetables rich in each of these nutrients.



- ▶ **Vitamin A**  
Tomatoes and tomato products, sweet red peppers  
Dark leafy greens (spinach, kale, and mustard greens)  
Orange fruits like mango, cantaloupe, and apricots  
Bright orange vegetables (carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin)

- ▶ **Vitamin C**  
Citrus fruits, kiwi fruit, guava, papaya, and cantaloupe  
Broccoli, peppers, tomatoes, cabbage, potatoes  
Dark leafy greens (spinach and turnip greens)

- ▶ **Folate**  
Cooked dry beans and peas  
Oranges  
Dark leafy greens (spinach, kale, and mustard greens)

- ▶ **Potassium**  
Bananas, plantains, dried fruits, oranges, cantaloupe  
Cooked dry beans, Soybeans  
Tomato products (sauce, paste, puree)  
Beet greens or other cooked greens  
Baked white or sweet potatoes, winter squash



## A closer look at GRAINS...

Grain products are an important part of a healthy diet; therefore, it is important that you choose your grains wisely. Selecting whole grains can reduce your risk of coronary heart disease, may help with your weight maintenance, and may lower your risk for other chronic diseases. For this reason, it is recommended that at least half of your grain servings be consumed as whole grains.

### What is a whole grain?

A product made with whole grains uses the entire part of the seed. This includes three important parts: the bran, the germ, and the endosperm. When a grain is refined, the bran and the germ portion of the seed are removed, leaving the endosperm which is high in starchy carbohydrates and low in vitamins and minerals. Although nutrients are often added back to refined grains, whole grains offer more fiber as well as many important nutrients. Whole grains can be milled into flour or eaten whole, cracked, split or ground, as long as the whole portion of the seed is used.

### How does a consumer identify foods made from whole grains?

You should check the list of ingredients on the package to see if the first ingredient begins with the word “whole” such as in “whole wheat flour.” This indicates that the product is made primarily from whole grains. Just because a product name includes the words “wheat” or “multi-grain,” it does not mean the food is predominately made from whole grains.

#### Ingredients that Include the “Whole” Grain

- Whole wheat
- Whole grain [name of grain]
- Stone-ground whole [grain]
- Whole grain corn or cornmeal
- Oatmeal, whole or rolled oats
- Kamut, millet, amaranth, buckwheat, or kasha
- Pearl barley
- Brown rice
- Popcorn



#### Ingredients That Do Not Contain the “Whole” Grain

- Unbleached flour
- Organic unbleached flour
- Enriched flour
- Semolina, durum wheat, or wheat flour
- Degerminated corn meal
- Bran

## A closer look at MILK and MILK PRODUCTS...

Milk and milk products are rich sources of calcium, which help to build bone mass and maintain bone density. In addition to calcium, these products contribute substantial amounts of other nutrients, including protein, phosphorus, potassium, riboflavin, magnesium, zinc, and vitamins A, B, and D. The Dietary Guidelines recommend consuming three cups of low-fat or fat-free milk or an equivalent amount of low-fat or fat-free yogurt or cheese. If you do not consume milk or milk products, you should seek appropriate and healthy substitutes.

### Identifying healthy milk substitutes.....

Many Americans choose to avoid certain or all milk and milk-related products due to allergies, lactose intolerance, and personal dietary patterns. Eliminating milk and milk products from your diet may result in inadequate calcium intake. Therefore, if you do not drink milk or eat milk products, you must strive to meet your daily calcium requirement by consuming calcium-rich alternatives. When choosing a milk substitute, it is important for you to remember that not all substitutes are equivalent. Some milk substitutes are high in fat and contain large amounts of added sugar. For this reason, it is best to choose substitutes that are low in fat and sugar whenever possible. Furthermore, not all milk substitutes provide as many nutrients as milk (so be sure to carefully read the food label). Here is a list of milk substitutes you should consider:

#### Milk allergies or specific dietary patterns

(i.e. vegans and lacto-vegetarians)

- Milk Substitutes  
(Calcium-Fortified Soy, Rice, Almond, and Multi-grain Beverage)
- Non-dairy Cheese (monitor fat content)
- Calcium-Rich Greens  
(Collards, Kale, and Mustard greens)
- Non-dairy Yogurt



#### Lactose intolerance

- Low-fat or non-fat Yogurt  
(contains live bacterial cultures that aid lactose digestion)
- Low-fat Cheese (cheese contains very little lactose)
- Low-fat or non-fat Lactose-Free Milk

