Chapter 8. Fats, Added Sugars, and Salt

Moving on from food groups…it's time to talk about how to choose healthy fats within your calorie needs and how to limit unhealthy fats, added sugars, and salt. Let's start with fats. To do this, you'll need "My Healthy Eating Plan." You have two more areas left that you need to fill out: fats and oils, and sweets.

The skinny on fats

Fats and oils are part of a healthy diet and play many important roles in the body. Fat provides energy and is a carrier of important nutrients such as vitamins A, D, E, and K and carotenoids. But fat can impact the health of our hearts and arteries in a positive or negative way, depending on the types of fat we eat. Experts recommend getting between 20 and 35 percent of calories from total fat, with most fats coming from sources of "good" fat, such as fish, nuts, and vegetable oils.

SOUND BITES:

- **Eat less saturated and *trans* fats, and cholesterol.**
- **Be wise about fats by eating fish, nuts, and foods with or prepared with vegetable oils.**
- **Use the label to choose fats wisely.**

Limit saturated and *trans* fats, and cholesterol. Eating too many saturated and *trans* fats, or cholesterol, may raise the level of LDL (bad) cholesterol and increase the risk of heart disease. A saturated fat, the type of fat that is solid at room temperature, is found mostly in animal-based food products. A *trans* fat is made when liquid vegetable oil is processed to become solid. And cholesterol is a fatty substance found only in animal-based products like egg yolks and whole milk. It is important to eat less than 10 percent of your calories from saturated fats. How do we figure this out?

For example, if you aim to eat 2,000 calories per day, your daily allowance of saturated fat would be less than 10 percent of 2,000 calories or 200 calories. There are approximately 9 calories in a gram of fat. OK, OK. To make the math easier, we'll use 10 calories per gram of fat. This at least gives you the right idea. Therefore, 200 calories/10 g/cal. = 20 or 20 grams—which equals 100% DV for saturated fat. This table shows the saturated fat limits for people with various calorie needs. Also, you should keep *trans* fats as low as possible, and eat less than 300 milligrams of cholesterol each day. These limits are recommended so you will not consume too much saturated fat and too many calories in your healthy eating plan.

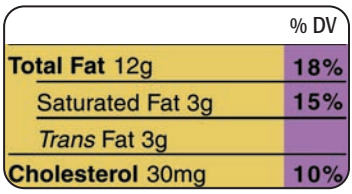
Total Calorie Intake	Limit of Saturated Fat Intake
1,600	18 g or less
2,000	20 g or less
2,200	24 g or less
2,500	25 g or less
2,800	31 g or less

Unhealthy fats such as saturated and *trans* fats, and cholesterol, are found in many foods. So, look for choices that are lean, fat-free, or low-free when selecting and preparing meat, poultry, dry beans, and milk products. An easy and quick way to reduce saturated fats is to trim excess fat from meat and poultry and remove the skin from poultry. Additionally, watch out for foods processed or made with certain oils (for example, palm oil, palm fruit oil, palm kernel oil, and coconut oil) that increase the amount of saturated fats in the food. Examples of foods that tend to have saturated fats are fatty cuts of meat, whole milk products, cakes, cookies, pies, crackers, candy, candy bars, household shortening, and creamers. Limiting these foods can reduce saturated fats in your diet.

Trans fats are mostly found in food products made with shortening and partially hydrogenated vegetable oils—liquid oil that is processed to become a solid fat. Most of the *trans* fats Americans eat come from cakes, cookies, crackers, pies, fried potatoes, household shortening, and hard (stick) margarine. Look for partially hydrogenated oil in the ingredient list—and limit these foods. Limiting consumption of many processed foods is a good way to reduce *trans* and saturated fats.

Use the label—what to look for and how it adds up.

Use the % DV on the Nutrition Facts label to identify whether total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol are high or low. Remember: 5% DV or less is low and 20% DV or more is high. There is no % DV for *trans* fat, but you should aim to keep *trans* fat intake as low as possible.



Additionally, the front of many food packages has information called claims that describe a specific level of fat in a food. Some examples of claims to look for are "fat-free," "low saturated fat," or "light."

There are many ways to reduce saturated fats in your diet. The table on the next page shows a few examples of the saturated fat content of different forms of foods you may eat. Compare foods in the same food type (for example, regular cheddar cheese and low-fat cheddar cheese). You can choose the one with less saturated fat and still eat many of the foods you enjoy.

Be wise about fat. Choose fats found in fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Most of the fat in your diet should come from sources of what are called polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat. You may have heard of polyunsaturated fats such as omega-6 and omega-3 fatty acids. It's a mouthful, we know, but a mouthful of these fats is good for you in moderation to replace the saturated and *trans* fats you have chosen to cut back on. As we mentioned before, experts recommend getting between 20 and 35 percent of calories from *total* fat, with most fats coming from fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. And we've made it easier for you to get these amounts of fat by following the food group recommendations. Look at the table below, and see whether you can add any foods there to your repertoire of foods in "My Healthy Eating Plan." One more word of caution about fats: calories. Foods that are high in fats are usually high in calories.

Monounsaturated Fatty Acids	Polyunsaturated Omega-6 Fatty Acids	Polyunsaturated Omega-3 Fatty Acids
Nuts	Vegetable oils:	Walnuts
Vegetable oils:	Soybean	Flaxseed
Canola	Corn	Certain fish[a]:
Olive	Safflower	Salmon
High oleic safflower		Trout
Sunflower		Herring
		Vegetable oils:
		Soybean
		Canola

[a] Women who may become pregnant, pregnant women, nursing mothers, and young children should avoid some types of fish and eat types lower in mercury. See www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/admehg3.html or call 1-888-SAFEFOOD for more information.

Food Category[a]	Portion	Saturated Fat Content (grams)	Saturated Fat % Daily Value[b]	Calories
Cheese				
• Regular cheddar cheese	1 oz	6.0	30	114
• Low-fat cheddar cheese	1 oz	1.2	6	49
Ground beef				
• Regular ground beef (25% fat)	3 oz (cooked)	6.1	31	236
• Extra lean ground beef (5% fat)	3 oz (cooked)	2.6	13	148
Milk				
• Whole milk (3.25%)	1 cup	4.6	23	146
• Low-fat (1%) milk	1 cup	1.5	8	102
Breads				
• Croissant (med)	1 medium	6.6	33	231
• Bagel, oat bran (4")	1 medium	0.2	1	227
Frozen desserts				
• Regular ice cream	1/2 cup	4.9	25	145
• Frozen yogurt, low-fat	1/2 cup	2.0	10	110
Table spreads				
• Butter	1 tsp	2.4	12	34
• Soft margarine with zero *trans* fats	1 tsp	0.7	4	25
Chicken				
• Fried chicken (leg with skin)	3 oz (cooked)	3.3	17	212
• Roasted chicken (breast, no skin)	3 oz (cooked)	0.9	5	140
Fish				
• Fried fish	3 oz	2.8	14	195
• Baked fish	3 oz	1.5	8	129

[a] Source: Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17.

[b] % DVs listed in this column are based on the food amounts listed in the table.

Added sugars

We talked about added sugars in the last chapter when discussing carbohydrates. You also may have noticed that in "My Healthy Eating Plan," there is a place for you to add sweets. Sweets could include foods that have added sugars like ice cream, cookies, some breakfast cereals, fruit drinks, and fruit yogurt. This might seem tricky when you look on a Nutrition Facts label. The only information you will see there is the total amount of sugar (added sugar and naturally occurring sugars) in a food. That's OK. We are going to help make this information clearer. Let's get started.

The Nutrition Facts label lists how many grams of sugar the food contains, but does not list added sugars separately. The amount listed includes sugars that are naturally present in foods (such as the fructose and sucrose in fruit, or the lactose in milk) and sugars added to the food during processing or preparation.

Added sugars, also known as caloric sweeteners, provide calories but few or no vitamins and minerals. So, the more foods with added sugars you eat, the more difficult it can be to get the nutrients you require within your calorie needs. And, if you go over your calorie needs, you may gain weight. Our goal is to choose and prepare foods and beverages with *little* added sugars.

How do you know whether a food contains added sugars? On packaged foods, look on the ingredient list. The ingredients are listed in order of amount by weight from most to least. Foods that have added sugars as one of the first few ingredients may be high in total sugars. Check the Nutrition Facts label to determine the amount of sugars per serving of the food. The sugars listed include naturally occurring sugars (like those in fruit and milk) as well as those added to a food or drink. When you see sugar on the Nutrition Facts label, you can visualize the total amount of sugar (natural and added) in 1 serving of a food item: 4 grams of sugar = ~1 teaspoon = ~16 calories. For example, a 12-fluid ounce soft drink with 150 calories typically has almost the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar.

Names for added sugars in an ingredient list include brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, fruit juice concentrates, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, honey, invert sugar, lactose, maltose, malt syrup, molasses, raw sugar, sucrose, and syrup. On the next page is an example of an ingredient list of a fruit yogurt, and the added sugar is circled. Also, check the front of the food package for guidance. Sometimes, the label will say "sugar-free" or "no added sugars."

INGREDIENTS: Cultured Grade A reduced fat milk, apples, high fructose corn syrup, cinnamon, nutmeg, natural flavors, and pectin. Contains active yogurt and *L. acidophilus* cultures.

Foods from restaurants, convenience stores, or other food stores may also have added sugar. The foods that contribute the most added sugars to diets of Americans are regular soft drinks; sugar and candy; cakes, cookies, and pies; fruit drinks such as fruit punch; sweetened milk and milk products such as ice cream, sweetened yogurt, and sweetened milk; and sweetened grains such as sugar-sweetened cereals, cinnamon toast, and honey-nut waffles. We hope the sugar story is getting clearer.

Now, you may be looking at "My Healthy Eating Plan" and wondering, "How does this all go together?" You may think that there are not many options for sweets in a healthy eating plan. Well, unfortunately, this is true in one sense. There isn't a lot of room in a healthy eating plan for cakes, cookies, pies, regular soft drinks, and other sugar-loaded foods without gaining weight. It's that simple. But there are ways that we can make a little more room in the healthy eating plan to allow for those foods, occasionally. We will discuss that in chapter 9, "The Balancing Act: Food and Physical Activity." But first, let's get to our last topic in this chapter: Salt.

Sad but true: Chocolate is not a food group!

Some people should get no more than 1,500 milligrams of sodium each day, and should meet the potassium recommendation through foods. These people are:

- Individuals with high blood pressure
- African-Americans/ blacks
- Middle-aged or older adults

Consult your health care provider for advice on how much sodium and potassium you should get.

Salt

Nearly all of us eat too much salt (sodium). On average, the more salt a person eats, the higher his or her blood pressure is. Most salt we eat comes from processed foods, not necessarily from the salt shaker. Some people are surprised by this, and that is why we are going to talk about the Nutrition Facts label again—you'll see "salt" listed as sodium there. For our purposes, we can use the terms "salt" and "sodium" interchangeably.

Eating less salt is an important way to reduce the risk of high blood pressure, which may in turn reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, congestive heart failure, and kidney damage.

In addition to eating less salt, other lifestyle changes may prevent or delay getting high blood pressure and may help lower high blood pressure. These lifestyle changes include eating more potassium-rich foods, losing excess weight, being more physically active, and eating a healthy diet. Let's see, we talked briefly about potassium in chapter 5, "A Calorie Is a Calorie, or Is It?" We'll mention it again here to emphasize the importance of eating potassium-rich foods.



tips

for eating less salt:

- When you're choosing packaged foods, look at the sodium content on the Nutrition Facts label. Use the percent Daily Value (% DV) to help limit your sodium intake. 5% DV or less is low and 20% DV or more is high. You don't want to exceed a total of 100% DV for sodium in a day. Some people (people with high blood pressure, African-Americans/blacks, and people who are middle-aged or older) should get even less—about half as much.
- Compare sodium content for similar foods. This can really make a difference. The table on the next page shows you examples of foods that have a range of sodium content depending on the brand chosen. By comparing brands of similar foods, you can save over hundreds of milligrams of sodium. Use the Nutrition Facts label on the food package to select food brands that are lower in sodium.
- Use the claims on the front of the food package to quickly identify foods that contain less salt or that are a good source of potassium, a nutrient you want to get more of in your daily diet. Examples include "low in sodium," "very low sodium," and "high in potassium."
- When you're preparing food at home, use herbs and spices to add flavor to your foods so you don't depend too heavily on salt. Don't salt foods before or during cooking—and limit salt use at the table.
- When you're eating out, ask that your meal be prepared without added salt or ask the server to identify foods on the menu that are made without added salt.

OK…so nearly all of us eat too much salt, and most of us don't get enough potassium—it is no wonder so many of us have high blood pressure! Here's what you need to know about sodium and potassium.

Everyone should get no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium each day. People with high blood pressure, African-Americans/blacks, and people who are middle-aged or older should get even less, because sodium from salt can affect those folks more than others.

As you decrease the amount of salt you eat, your taste for salt will gradually decrease—and *you won't miss it*. Adding spices to foods makes them more flavorful—another way to help you decrease the amount of salt you use when cooking. We've provided a tip sheet in part IV, "Recipes and Resources," for ways to use spices instead of salt when preparing food.

The table below shows the importance of reading the food label to determine the sodium content of food. The sodium content, shown below in milligrams, or mg, can often differ significantly between similar foods or brands.

Food Group	Amount	Range of Sodium Content (mg)	% Daily Value (% DV)[a] for Sodium
Breads, all types	1 oz	95–210	4–9
Frozen pizza, plain, cheese	4 oz	450–1,200	19–50
Frozen vegetables, all types	1/2 cup	2–160	0–7
Salad dressing, regular fat, all types	2 Tbsp	110–505	5–21
Salsa	2 Tbsp	150–240	6–10
Soup (tomato), reconstituted	8 oz	700–1,260	29–53
Tomato juice	8 oz (~1 cup)	340–1,040	14–43
Potato chips[b]	1 oz (28.4 g)	120–180	5–8
Tortilla chips[b]	1 oz (28.4 g)	105–160	4–7
Pretzels[b]	1 oz (28.4 g)	290–560	12–23

[a] % DVs listed in this column are based on the food amounts listed in the table. The DV for sodium is 2,400 milligrams.

[b] All snack foods are regular flavor, salted.

Source: Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 17, and recent manufacturers' label data from retail market surveys. Serving sizes were standardized to be comparable among brands within a food. Pizza and bread slices vary in size and weight across brands.

Note: None of the foods in the ARS Nutrient Database or market surveys were labeled low-sodium products.

Get 4,700 milligrams of potassium each day. You can use the foods listed in appendix B-1, page 328, to add to "My Healthy Eating Plan," to help increase the amount of naturally rich (not fortified) potassium you are getting in your diet. Potassium-containing food sources include leafy greens such as spinach and collards, bananas and fruit from vines such as grapes and blackberries, root vegetables such as carrots and potatoes, and citrus fruits such as oranges and grapefruit.

When buying packaged food, check the Nutrition Facts label to see potassium content. Use the % DV to look for foods that are low in sodium and high in potassium. We do need to warn you that sometimes, potassium is not found on the label—but you've got a good list in appendix B.

Summing it up

Let's sum up what we've learned in this chapter…

- Choose fats found in fish, nuts, and vegetables.
- Know your limits on fats, salt, and sugars.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label on foods. Look for foods low in saturated and *trans* fats, cholesterol, and sodium.
- Choose and prepare foods and beverages with little salt (sodium) and/or added sugars (caloric sweeteners).