



Planning Meals: The Fat Challenge

Advice about fat can be very confusing, especially since the recommended types and amounts of fat seem to change constantly. What is not in dispute is this: fat is an essential part of the diet. While it is good to moderate the amount you eat, fat should not be eliminated. Fat provides energy, supplies essential nutrients such as vitamins A, D, E and K and is an important part of all body cells.

Adding to the confusion is the fact that the many types of fat can have distinct effects on health. Some fats are known to increase risk for developing certain diseases such as heart disease and cancers, while others may actually decrease the risk. Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating recommends choosing a balanced diet and eating a variety of foods in moderation. The same guidelines apply to fat: Choose a variety and enjoy each in moderation. (For more information on Canada's Food Guide, pick up a copy of Senior Friendly Ideas for Healthy Eating 1.)

Ideas for moderating fat by following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating

Grain products

- ⚙ Eat more whole grain breads, pastas, rice and cereals, which are all very low in fat.
- ⚙ Monitor sauces and spreads.
 - Spread butter or margarine thinly.
 - Use jam on toast instead of butter or margarine.
 - Add tomato-based sauces to pasta, with a sprinkling of grated cheese.
- ⚙ Limit higher fat foods such as doughnuts, commercial muffins and croissants.
- ⚙ Read labels and choose lower fat varieties of crackers and cookies, such as saltines, melba toast, fig newtons, gingersnaps.



- ⚙ When baking, reduce the amount of fat in a recipe, e.g. by adding applesauce or low fat sour cream for half the fat.

Vegetables and fruits

- ⚙ Eat more vegetables and fruits, which are all naturally low in fat.
- ⚙ Use a dash of lemon or herbs on vegetables instead of butter or margarine.
- ⚙ Use "lower fat" varieties of salad and mayonnaise dressings.
- ⚙ Make your own salad dressing by mixing a tablespoon of vinegar (or flavoured vinegar) with a teaspoon of olive oil.

Milk products

- ☼ Choose lower fat milks such as skim, one or two per cent.
- ☼ Use yogurt or low fat sour cream instead of sour cream.
- ☼ Look for lower fat varieties of cheese, cream cheeses and sour cream. Choose sherbet, frozen yogurt or ice milk instead of ice cream.
- ☼ Use milk or evaporated milk in coffee and tea instead of cream.

Meats and alternatives

- ☼ Eat fish once or twice a week.
- ☼ Have a meatless meal at least once a week. Enjoy baked beans, an omelette or a vegetable stir-fry with chickpeas.
- ☼ Replace half of the meat in casseroles with cooked dried beans, peas and lentils or barley and some extra vegetables.
- ☼ Eat smaller portions of meat. Have two to three ounces (60 to 90 grams) of cooked meat (the size of a deck of cards).
- ☼ Choose lean cuts of meat: sirloin, beef round and rump; pork leg roasts, tenderloin and ham; white skinless poultry. Trim off all visible fat before cooking.
- ☼ For luncheon meats, choose ham, pastrami, corn beef, beef, chicken or turkey breast and canned fish more often. Bologna, salami, wieners, sausages and bacon are high in fat and should be eaten less often and in moderation.

- ☼ Bake, broil, grill, poach, roast or braise meats instead of frying. Baste with wine, lemon juice or broth.

Other foods

- ☼ Limit high fat snack foods such as potato chips, nachos and chocolates. Choose pretzels and unbuttered popcorn instead.
- ☼ Choose olive or canola oils for cooking or salad dressing.

Other tips

- ☼ All foods can be part of a healthy diet. Balance higher fat foods with lower fat ones. If you have a hamburger and fries for lunch, for example, choose a vegetable and chickpea stir-fry over rice for supper.
- ☼ Eat regular meals and snacks.
- ☼ Look for and use “lower fat” versions of your usual products. Lower fat products still contain calories and should be eaten in moderation. If you don’t like the lower fat varieties, enjoy the regular products in smaller amounts, less often.
- ☼ Use a non-stick frying pan, adding a teaspoon of oil if necessary.
- ☼ Buy a cookbook with low fat recipes, or borrow one from the library or a friend.
- ☼ Use herbs and spices rather than rich sauces to add flavour to food.

