# Fat Facts

## Not All Fats and Oils Are Created Equally

Fats and oils are made up of basic units called fatty acids. Each type of fat or oil is a mixture of different fatty acids.

- **Saturated Fats** are found mainly in animal sources such as meat and poultry, whole or 2% milk, and butter. Some vegetable oils like coconut, palm kernel oil, and palm oil are saturated. Saturated fats are usually solid at room temperature.
- **Monounsaturated Fats** are found mainly in vegetable oils such as canola and olive oils. They are liquid at room temperature.
- **Polyunsaturated Fats** are found mainly in vegetable oils such as safflower, sunflower, and corn oils. Polyunsaturated fats are also the main fats found in seafood. They are liquid or soft at room temperature.
- **Trans Fats** are formed when vegetable oils are processed into margarine or shortening. Sources of trans fats in the diet include snack foods and baked goods made with "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil" or "vegetable shortening." Trans fatty acids also occur naturally in some animal products such as dairy products.

## Cholesterol

Blood cholesterol and dietary cholesterol are two different types of cholesterol. Dietary cholesterol is found in food of animal origin such as egg yolks, organ meats, and full fat dairy products. If the level of cholesterol in the blood is too high, cholesterol and other fats can stick to the artery walls.

Since blood cholesterol is waxy and cannot dissolve in water, it is carried through the blood in packages called lipoproteins. **High density lipoprotein (HDL) is "good" cholesterol and low density lipoprotein (LDL) is "bad" cholesterol.**

HDL cholesterol gathers up excess cholesterol in the blood and carries it to the liver. The liver reprocesses or excretes it. HDL may also help remove some of the cholesterol deposited on the artery walls.
Excess LDL cholesterol can increase the risk of heart disease because it is LDL cholesterol that builds up on the artery walls. The type of fats and oils we eat affect cholesterol levels.

**SEE NEXT PAGE for important research information…..**

## Research Says…

- Eating **saturated fat** increases LDL and total cholesterol. High blood levels of LDL and total cholesterol are ***risk factors for heart disease***.
- **Trans fatty acids** act like saturated fats and raise LDL cholesterol levels. They may also lower HDL cholesterol in the blood.
- Eating foods high in **monounsaturated fatty acids** may help lower LDL cholesterol levels and decrease risk of heart disease.
- Eating **polyunsaturated fats** in place of saturated fats decreases LDL cholesterol levels.

## Fat and Cholesterol: Know Your Limits

The guidelines for fat intake for healthy Americans are to consume no more than 30 percent of total calories from fat. The "30 percent" guideline means:

- 0-10 percent of total calories from saturated fats,
- About 10 - 15 percent of total calories from monounsaturated fats, and
- About 10 percent from polyunsaturated fats.

For cholesterol, healthy Americans should limit their intake to less than 300 milligrams per day.

Knowing your limits includes eating healthfully -- include 5 or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Base your meals on whole grains, beans, and legumes, or a 4-ounce portion of lean meat or poultry without the skin, and 2-3 servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy products each day. Limit your intake of sweets, and other high-fat foods -- and choose the type of fats and oils you eat carefully.

Adapted from **The American Dietetic Association/National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics.**
ADA's Consumer Nutrition Information Line (800) 366-1655

For additional information, contact Foodlink's Nutritionist (585) 328-3380 x125