

The Facts on Fat

Why Do We Need Fat in Our Diet?

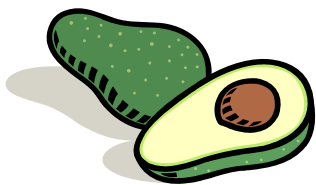
Fat is an essential nutrient needed for good health. It is common for people with an eating disorder to have the belief that “all fat is bad” or “the less fat I have the better”. Research has shown that it is common for eating disorder patients to be deficient in essential fatty acids and vitamin D, a nutrient which fat also contributes.



Fat is important part of a balanced diet because:

- When stored in the body, fat plays an important role as a energy store which the body can use if energy is required.
- It provides 2 essential fatty acids (linoleic acid and alpha-linoleic acid) which our bodies cannot manufacture of their own.
- It provides insulation and protection for internal organs and reproductive organs.
- It provides fat soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E and K) and phytochemicals like beta-carotene and lycopene.
- It provides fatty acids required for making hormones, brain cells and healthy skin.
- It is essential for hormones such as peptide YY (PYY) and cholecystokinin (CCK) to be released during digestion. These hormones are responsible for signalling satiety (i.e. telling you when to stop eating).
- It adds flavour and texture to foods.
- It assists in slowing down the rate at which your stomach empties, thus leaving you more satisfied for longer.

- For women, low fat intake and therefore low body fat can cause loss of periods and impact on your reproductive system.



What are the Different Types of Fats

Saturated fats: these fats tend to be solid and are found mainly in animal foods (e.g. butter, cream, meats, cheese, milk) but also include palm oil and coconut oil.

Mono unsaturated fats: these fats are found predominantly in olives, olive oil, canola oil, avocados, peanuts and most other nuts. All oils

contain some monounsaturated fats as do meat, chicken, eggs and fish.

Polyunsaturated fats: these fats are extracted from seeds such as sunflower, safflower, soy beans, sesame and grape seed to make cooking oils.

Omega-3 fats: these fats are a sub-group of polyunsaturated fats with a slightly different structure. Fish (especially oily fish like salmon, tuna and sardines) and seafood contain high levels of 2 omega-3 fats called EPA and DHA.

Trans fats: these fats are structurally the same as unsaturated fats but in the body, behave the same as saturated fats. They occur naturally in butter, milk, beef and lamb.

Cholesterol: cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like compound found in the blood and is different from fat. It is an essential part of cell membranes and is used to create hormones and vitamin D.



Five Tips to Make Sure You're Meeting Your Fat Requirements

1. Add a fat based spread (e.g. butter, margarine, peanut butter, avocado, hummus, mayonnaise) anytime you are having toast/bread/wrap/sandwich.
2. Use a cooking oil such as olive oil, peanut oil or vegetable oil when cooking a meal for lunch or dinner.
3. Include at least 3 serves of non-fat modified calcium-rich foods everyday (e.g. cheese, yoghurt, milk or calcium-fortified soy alternatives of these).
4. Add nuts, seeds and/or olives to your lunch and dinner (e.g. add to a salad, stirfry, pasta dish).
5. Eat a variety of foods—lots of different foods contribute fats to our diet (e.g. dairy, meat, chicken, fish, fun foods) as no food is made up of one nutrient only. Eating a variety of foods assists you in meeting your fat requirements and means you get some of all the different types of fats listed above.

