

Cholesterol: Making Heart-Healthy Choices

Eating for a healthy heart

When you are eating for a healthy heart, you need to pay special attention to:

- Avoiding high intake of total, saturated, and *trans* fats
- Avoiding foods that are high in cholesterol
- Eating a diet that is high in fiber
- Exercising regularly
- Managing stress

Fat helps the body in many different ways:

- Fat deposits surround and protect organs, such as the kidneys, heart, and liver
- Fat balances hormones
- A layer of fat beneath the skin, known as subcutaneous fat, insulates the body from environmental temperature changes, thereby preserving body heat
- Dietary fat acts as a long-lasting fuel source for low-intensity exercise
- Dietary fat provides fat-soluble vitamins and vitamins A, D, E, and K

If you eat too much fat:

- Fat is stored in fat cells and adipose tissue
- Fat provides the body with the building blocks for cholesterol

In general:

- Choose from these foods that provide good sources of fat:

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Oily fish
- Olive oil
- Lean meats

- Avoid or limit the following foods that contain fat:

- Butter
- Margarine
- Processed foods containing *trans* fats (look at labels for *trans* fats)
- Hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils

- Fatty cuts of meats

Getting to Know Your Fats

Type of fat	Properties	Effect	Foods
Saturated fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solid at room temperature • High melting points • Less likely to become rancid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase harmful low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol • Increase total cholesterol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Butter – Whole milk – Cream – Cheese – Ice cream – Other full-fat dairy products – Animal meats – Lard – Poultry skin • Plant sources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Coconut oil – Palm oils
Monounsaturated fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low melting point • May become rancid when exposed to light and oxygen for extended periods of time • Soft or liquid at room temperature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease harmful LDL cholesterol, when used in place of saturated fats • Have minimal change in beneficial high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol • Decrease total cholesterol when used in place of saturated fats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Olive, canola, and peanut oils • Olives • Peanut butter • Nuts • Avocados
Polyunsaturated fats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft or liquid at room temp • Low melting point • May become rancid when exposed to light and oxygen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease harmful LDL cholesterol, • May decrease beneficial HDL cholesterol • Decrease total cholesterol when used in place of saturated fats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable oils (corn, sunflower, safflower, soybean, and cottonseed) • Oils (flaxseed, canola) • Nuts and seeds • Shellfish and fish (mackerel, salmon, anchovies, herring, lake trout, sardines, and tuna)