

Fats

How do I cut down on saturated fat and hydrogenated vegetable oil?

There are lots of ways to do this – here are some suggestions:

- Cut down on foods high in these types of fat, such as meat pies, butter, biscuits, cakes and processed food.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and always trim off any fat.
- Choose lower-fat varieties of dairy foods, such as semi-skimmed or skimmed milk, reduced-fat cheese and lower-fat yoghurts.

It's also a good idea to watch the total amount of fat you're eating, so:

- Try to get most of your energy from starchy foods such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes, which contain less than half the calories of fat. Remember to choose wholegrain varieties where possible and watch how much added fat you use for cooking and serving.
- Try boiling, steaming, grilling, poaching or microwaving food rather than frying or roasting.
- Try 'dry roasting', which is frying with no oil.



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Skimmed
0.6g fat per pint

Semi-skimmed
9g fat per pint

Full-fat milk
22g fat per pint



When you're trying to make a healthy choice, most people should aim to:

- eat more fruit and vegetables
- base meals on starchy foods such as bread, pasta and rice
- cut down on fat – especially saturated fat and trans fat
- cut down on salt and sugar

Should I cut out all fat?

To stay healthy we need to have some fat in our diet. What is important is the kind of fat we are eating.

Eating too much saturated fat and trans fat has been linked to heart disease, so it's a good idea to cut down on food that is high in these fats and to try to have food that is high in unsaturated fat instead. See the next page for an explanation of saturated and unsaturated fats, and see 'What is hydrogenated vegetable oil?' for more about trans fat.

It is still important to watch how much total fat you are eating because eating too much fat can lead to weight gain.

Is this advice the same for children?

For children under two, it's much more important to make sure they're getting enough calories and a variety of foods, than to worry about how much fat they're eating. So, for example, make sure you give your child full-fat milk and dairy foods until they're at least two. After the age of two, if your child is eating a broad range of foods, you can gradually switch to semi-skimmed milk. Skimmed milk isn't suitable as a main drink for under-5s.



What is the difference between saturated and unsaturated fat?

Saturated and unsaturated fat are the two main types of fat.

Saturated – This type of fat can increase the risk of heart disease because it may raise blood cholesterol levels. So cut down on foods such as meat pies, sausages, butter, cheese, cakes, biscuits and foods containing coconut or palm oil, because all these can be high in saturated fat.

Unsaturated – Having unsaturated fat instead of saturated fat actually lowers blood cholesterol levels. There are two types of unsaturated fat – polyunsaturated and monounsaturated. Rather than saturated fat, try to choose more foods high in unsaturated fat, such as oily fish or food containing oils such as sunflower, corn, olive or rapeseed.

What is hydrogenated vegetable oil?

Hydrogenated vegetable oil is formed when liquid oil is turned into solid fat through a process called hydrogenation. During this process, trans fats may be formed. Some evidence suggests that the effects of the trans fats formed through hydrogenation may be worse than saturated fat. These trans fats increase the risk of coronary heart disease by raising blood cholesterol levels.

If a product contains hydrogenated vegetable oil, you will see it included in the ingredients list. Hydrogenated vegetable oil is found in some biscuits, cakes, pastry, margarine and some other processed foods.



Is it important to eat fish?

Eating fish, especially oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, pilchards or herring, can help reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. This is because of the type of unsaturated fats found in oily fish called omega 3 polyunsaturated fatty acids.



You should aim to eat at least two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily fish.

What is a lot or a little?

If you want to make a healthy choice when you're choosing which products to buy, you might find it useful to check the nutrition information on the label.

You'll see figures for the fat content on many food labels. Use the following as a guide to what is a lot and what is a little fat per 100g food. If the quantity on the label falls between the figures given below, this is a moderate amount of fat.

This is A LOT of fat
20g fat or more per 100g
5g saturates or more per 100g

This is A LITTLE fat
3g fat or less per 100g
1g saturates or less per 100g