

### **Dietary fat- getting the balance right**

A healthy diet should always include a certain amount of fat because, among other things, it provides energy and vitamins like A and D. It also provides special, essential fats, which we can only get from foods. Fat makes our food feel nice in our mouths - which is why crispy chips or chocolate are so tempting. But of course too much of a good thing becomes a problem. Fat contains more calories per gram (9 calories per gram) than any other nutrient; so, a diet that is high in fat will also be high in calories, which will make it more difficult to control your weight. Try to eat no more than your Guideline Daily Amount (GDA), and choose unsaturated fats as far as possible. Unsaturated fats are the ones you find in oily fish, nuts and seeds, avocado and sunflower, rapeseed or olive oils.

**The GDA for total fat for an adult consuming 2000 calories per day is 70g**

### **DIFFERENT SORTS OF FATS**

Saturated fat is the type of fat most commonly linked to health problems like heart disease, which is why food labels often specify how much saturated fat is contained in a food.

We should all be cutting down on saturated fat and trans fats, replacing these with unsaturated fat (polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fat) instead. We should also be having more omega 3 fatty acids, which are found in oily fish.

### **SATURATED FAT**

Food that contains lots of saturates like pastries, butter, cheese and cream can raise blood cholesterol, which increases your risk of heart disease.

All these foods are high in saturated fat:

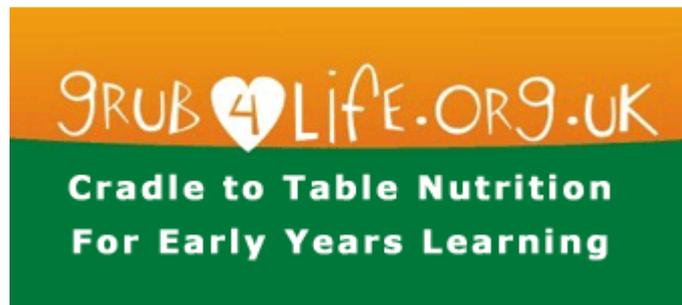
- meat products, meat pies, sausages
- hard cheese
- butter and lard
- pastry
- cakes and biscuits
- cream, soured cream and crème fraîche
- coconut oil, coconut cream or palm oil

### **Trans fats**

Trans fats (found in hydrogenated vegetable oils) have a similar effect on blood cholesterol to saturated fats: they raise the type of cholesterol in the blood that increases the risk of heart disease. In the UK, the use of hydrogenated vegetable oils has been greatly reduced over the past few years and this has helped reduce the amount of trans fats in many foods.

The most common foods containing trans fats are:

- bought biscuits and cakes



- fast food
- ready-made pastry
- some margarines

### **Unsaturated fats**

Unsaturated fats, which include polyunsaturated fats like sunflower oils and spreads and mono-unsaturated fats like olive oil, are a healthier choice than saturated or trans fats. It's important to remember that unsaturated fats contain the same number of calories as the less healthy saturated and trans fats.

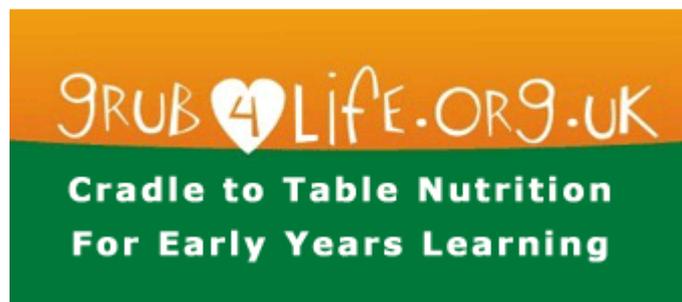
Unsaturated fats can contribute to reducing cholesterol levels and provide us with the essential fatty acids that our body needs. They omega-3 fatty acids found in oily fish, which may help prevent heart disease.

The following foods are all high in unsaturated fat:

- oily fish
- avocados
- nuts and seeds
- sunflower, rapeseed and olive oils and spreads (use sunflower and rapeseed oil for cooking and keep olive oil for salad dressings)
- vegetable oils

Try to have unsaturated fats rather than saturated fat in your diet. This means you could choose:

- oily fish instead of sausages or a meat pie
- unsaturated oils such as sunflower or rapeseed, instead of butter, lard and ghee, when cooking
- olive oil based vinaigrette for salad dressings instead of creamy dressings
- unsalted nuts rather than a biscuit when snacking
- mashed potato made with sunflower spread instead of butter and milk
- sunflower spread, high in unsaturated fat instead of butter
- 1% fat skimmed milk, instead of whole or semi skimmed milk, if you drink more than 1 pint per day.



### **Watch your fat levels**

Most packaged foods tell you how much total fat and saturated fat they contain on the front of pack label, or nutrition panel on the back of the pack. Compare the labels of different food products and choose those with less fat and less saturated fat.

The following guide can also help you work out if a food is high or low in fat.

### **Total fat - what's high and what's low?**

<b>High</b>	20g total fat or more per 100g
<b>Medium</b>	3g to 20g total fat per 100g
<b>Low</b>	3g total fat or less per 100g

### **Saturated fat - what's high and what's low?**

<b>High</b>	5g saturates or more per 100g
<b>Medium</b>	1.5g to 5g saturates per 100g
<b>Low</b>	1.5g saturates or less per 100g

### **What about Omega 3s?**

Oily fish is the best source of omega 3 fatty acids. These fatty acids have been shown to help protect against coronary heart disease. There has also been some inconclusive research suggesting other health benefits for omega 3 fatty acids, including their effect on children's brain development. The general advice is that most of us should aim to include more fish and omega 3s in our diets. Aim for 2-3 servings of fish each week.

- White fish include: plaice, halibut, skate, cod and haddock
- Oily fish include: salmon, fresh tuna, trout, sardines, pilchards and mackerel.