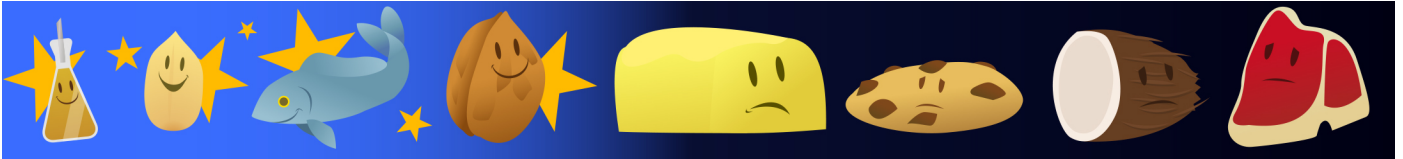


The Big Fat Question



Once upon a time, the big fat question was “butter or margarine?” If you were confused back then, you’re probably throwing up your hands these days. Now it’s butter vs. stick margarine vs. tub margarine vs. olive oil vs. coconut oil vs. fish oil vs. lard... you get the idea. What’s a person to do? To understand all the questions about fat, you need to look at the different types of fat.

Saturated Fat:

Most health experts agree that a diet high in saturated fat increases your risk of heart disease by raising total cholesterol and LDL (bad) cholesterol levels. According to the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, average daily intake of saturated fats should be no more than 10% of calories. Cutting down to 7% of calories will help your heart even more. For a 2,000 calorie diet, this translates to 22 grams and 16 grams per day, respectively. Saturated fat is found mainly in animal foods, such as butter, milk and milk products, beef and pork, chicken skin, and lard. Coconut, palm, and palm kernel oils are also high in saturated fats.

Unsaturated Fat:

There are two types of unsaturated fats: polyunsaturated fat (PUFA) and monounsaturated fat (MUFA).

Polyunsaturated Fat -- PUFA:

While saturated fat is usually referred to as “bad” fat, PUFA is known as a “good” fat. The two main types of PUFA are omega-6 fatty

acids and omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-6 fatty acids are found in liquid vegetable oils such as corn, safflower and sunflower, as well as nuts and seeds. This type of fat lowers total cholesterol. Omega-3 fatty acids are found in flaxseed, soybean, and canola oils, walnuts, and cold-water fish such as salmon and albacore tuna. This type of fat protects against fatal heart attacks. Most Americans don’t get enough omega-3 fat and would benefit from replacing saturated fat with this healthful fat. The best way to help your heart with PUFA is to eat two servings of omega-3 rich fish per week.

Monounsaturated Fat -- MUFA:

This other “good” fat is found mainly in vegetable oils (canola and olive), nuts, seeds and avocados. MUFA appears to have a neutral effect on cholesterol and heart disease. Small amounts can be included in your diet.

What About Trans Fat?

Small amounts of trans fats are found naturally in meat and milk. Synthetic trans fat is made when vegetable oil is partially hydrogenated for use in processed foods such as donuts, cookies, pastries, peanut butter, crackers, French fries, chips, and cake. Trans fat is not good for your heart. It raises total cholesterol and lowers HDL (good) cholesterol. It also causes inflammation and damages blood vessels.

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