

# Saturated Fat: The Other Bad Fat

While trans-fats have been labeled the worst kind of fat, saturated fat comes in at a close second as the “other” bad fat.

## Fat Needed to Function

Besides being an energy source, fat is a nutrient used in the production of cell membranes and in several hormone-like compounds that help regulate blood pressure, heart rate, blood vessel constriction, blood clotting and the nervous system. Fat also helps maintain healthy hair and skin, protects vital organs, keeps the body insulated and provides a sense of fullness after meals.

Eating too much fat, however, can be harmful. Eating large amounts of high-fat foods adds excess calories, which can lead to weight gain and obesity. Obesity is a risk factor for many diseases, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, sleep apnea and osteoarthritis. Too much of certain types of fats, such as saturated fat or trans-fat, can increase your blood cholesterol levels and your risk of coronary artery disease.

## Bad Fats

All fats are not created equal. The key is to replace bad fats with good fats in your diet. Saturated fats raise total blood cholesterol levels more than dietary cholesterol because they tend to boost both good HDL and bad LDL cholesterol. The net effect is negative, meaning it's important

to limit saturated fats. Limiting saturated fats in your diet, and eliminating trans-fat from partially-hydrogenated oils, is key to maintaining a healthy weight, good cholesterol levels and avoiding conditions such as heart disease, obesity and diabetes.

## Saturated Fat Foods

Saturated fat is most often found in animal products like beef, beef fat, lamb, pork, seafood, poultry fat, butter, eggs, cheese and other dairy products made from whole and two-percent milk. Other foods high in saturated fat include coconut, palm and other tropical oils.

## Trimming the Fat

Limit fat in your diet, but don't cut it out completely. Focus on reducing foods high in saturated fat, trans-fat and cholesterol, and select foods made with unsaturated fats. Consider these tips when making your choices:

- Sauté with olive oil instead of butter
- Use olive oil instead of vegetable oil in salad dressings and marinades
- Sprinkle nuts or sunflower seeds on salads instead of bacon bits

- Snack on a small handful of nuts rather than potato chips or processed crackers, or, try nut-butter spreads (non-hydrogenated) on celery, bananas or rice cakes
- Add slices of avocado, rather than cheese, to your sandwich
- Prepare fish such as salmon and mackerel, which contain monounsaturated and omega-3 fats

Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats have fewer adverse effects, but you still need to consume all fats in moderation. Eating large amounts of any fat adds excess calories. Make sure that fatty foods don't replace more nutritious options, like fruits, vegetables, legumes or whole grains.



## Did You Know...?

Many foods contain different kinds of fat and varying levels of each type. For example, butter contains unsaturated fats, but a large percentage of the total fat is saturated fat. A better option is canola oil, which has a high percentage of monounsaturated fat, but also contains smaller amounts of polyunsaturated and saturated fat.