



Fat

In order to adopt healthy eating habits, it helps to have a good understanding of the foods that we eat. Carbohydrate, protein, and fat are macronutrients. These foods deliver calories to the body and calories represent energy that our body transforms into the capacity to think, play, move, work, focus, and exercise. This handout provides a basic understanding of dietary fat - food sources, functions, and tips on what to choose. Fat often gets a bad reputation as people associate fat in our diet with fat on our bodies. Just like carbohydrate and protein, fat is an essential nutrient, imperative for overall health. The key is understanding what choices to make.

Food Sources:

1. **Animal Products:** meat, full-fat dairy, fatty fish, egg yolk
2. **Processed Foods:** cookies, crackers, baked goods, salad dressings
3. **Vegetable Oils:** canola, olive, peanut, sesame, walnut, safflower...
4. **Vegetables:** nuts, seeds, avocado



Fat Function:

- ✓ Provides energy during low to moderate intensity exercise (i.e., walking, jogging, easy cycling)
- ✓ Sheathes neurons and plays a role in sending messages throughout the body
- ✓ Comprises cell membranes and plays a role in cell signaling
- ✓ Certain fats, those we find in fish, avocado, olive oil, and nuts, can help improve heart health and reduce inflammation in the body
- ✓ Provides flavor and texture to food and meals
- ✓ Facilitates absorption of fat-soluble vitamins and minerals

Tips & Tactics:

✓ GENERAL HEALTH:

- Choose LEAN meat and limit red meat consumption to once per week. Excess saturated fat associated with fatty animal products can increase cholesterol and increase risk for cardiovascular disease.
- Opt for skim or 1% dairy products
- Favor fresh, whole, UNPROCESSED foods vs. processed and packaged goods. The trans fats often found in processed foods clog arteries, decrease fertility, and increase inflammation.
- Incorporate more HEALTHY FATS like olive oil, almonds, walnuts, canola oil, avocado, fatty fish and peanut oil
- Choose AGED cheeses and use sparingly. A sharper, more flavorful cheese can flavor dishes nicely in smaller quantities than more milder cheeses

✓ SPORT SPECIFIC TIPS:

- An athlete's diet is a low fat diet but not a no-fat diet. Incorporate healthy fats as part of an overall varied and balanced eating plan.
- Fat provides energy for lower-intensity exercise and is a significant fuel source for endurance and ultraendurance events
- Omega-3 fatty acids (flax seeds, walnuts, salmon) provide valuable nutrients and reduce inflammation.
- Limit fatty meat and fried foods. Reconsider traditionally low-quality, high-fat fast food options prior to training or competition in favor of a high-carbohydrate meal with moderate amounts of healthy fat.

