

Extension

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Newsletter

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Face the Fats – Facts about Healthy and Unhealthy Fats

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Fat is often considered the “bad guy” when it comes to food and health. Face the fats and keep them from getting a bad rap by focusing on the type of fat and the amount you eat.

Our body needs fat in the diet to absorb certain fat-soluble vitamins, such as vitamins A & D. We need fat for our nerves, brain, skin cells and to protect vital organs in our body. Fat helps control our body temperature. Fat is also a great energy source because it contains more calories than any other nutrient. Fat is especially important for children under the age of two. It helps their brain and nervous system develop properly.

On the other hand, fat can have negative effects on our health. It is connected with increased risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer and obesity.

There are three main types of fat – saturated, unsaturated and trans fat. It is healthiest to eat mostly unsaturated types which include monounsaturated and polyunsaturated.

1. **Saturated fat** is usually solid at room temperature. Examples are animal fats (fat on meat, skin on chicken), butter, cheese, and shortening. Saturated fat is also found in many processed foods like pies, doughnuts, biscuits, etc. Saturated fat increases our “lousy” LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol. It can also decrease our “healthy” HDL (high density lipoprotein) cholesterol. This raises our risk for heart and other diseases. Limiting saturated fats in our diet is important.
2. **Trans fats** act like saturated fat. They too should be limited as much as possible.
3. **Unsaturated fats** are usually liquid at room temperature. They are found in oils (olive, canola, sesame), nuts, seeds, oily fish and avocado. They help by lowering LDL cholesterol.



Tips for Success:

Following are some ways to lower the amount of saturated and trans fats:

- Use vegetable or seed oils (such as canola or olive) instead of butter, margarine or shortening.
- Choose the lowest fat meats. Those with the term “round”, “loin”, “chop” are leaner cuts.

- Trim visible fat off meat. Drain fat from ground meat. Remove skin from poultry.
- Bake, broil, roast or grill meats instead of frying.
- Limit the amount of chips, microwave buttered popcorn, and prepared foods. Doughnuts, pies, sweet rolls, creamy salads and dressings are other examples of foods high in unhealthy fats.
- Use low-fat or fat-free dairy products (skim or 1% milk, non-fat or low-fat yogurt, cottage cheese and sour cream).
- Season vegetables with herbs and spices instead of adding butter or sauces.
- Use reduced or non-fat salad dressings and mayonnaise or small amounts of those made with canola oil.

Let's Talk

One way to help your family make healthier choices is to categorize foods into three groups: Go, Slow and Whoa!

GO foods are good to eat almost anytime. Good low fat examples would be fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruits, skim or 1% milk, fat-free or low fat yogurt, canned tuna in water.

SLOW foods are sometimes foods. They are not off-limits but should not be eaten every day. Examples of slow foods when it comes to fat would be vegetables in added fat or sauces, oven baked French fries, 2% milk, processed cheese, peanut butter, whole eggs cooked without added fat, poultry with skin, lean ground beef.

WHOA foods are the least healthy so they should be eaten only once in a while. Some examples include fried vegetables and French fries, donuts and other sweet pastries, whole milk, yogurt/cheese/cottage cheese made from whole milk, fried meats (hamburgers, chicken, fish), bacon, hot dogs, lunchmeats, ice cream and chips.



Recipe for Health:

Baked Chicken Fingers

- 2 ½ pounds boneless chicken breasts
- ¼ cup nonfat plain yogurt
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp ground black pepper
- Non-stick cooking spray
- 2 cups Italian seasoned bread crumbs
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 ½ cups low-sodium pizza or spaghetti sauce



Preheat oven to 400 F. Cut chicken breasts into 1 inch wide strips. Measure and combine the yogurt, water, salt and pepper in a large mixing bowl. Add chicken strips to yogurt mixture and toss together until chicken is well coated. Measure and put grated Parmesan and bread crumbs into a large plastic bag. Lightly coat a baking sheet with non-stick cooking spray. Add 3 to 4 chicken strips at a time to the plastic bag. Seal bag and shake the chicken inside the bag until it is well coated. Place the chicken strips on the baking sheet about a ½ inch apart in a single layer. Do not overcrowd. Spray chicken strips with cooking spray and bake for 15-20 minutes. Warm pizza or spaghetti sauce in a small saucepan over low heat. Serve as a dipping sauce for the chicken fingers.

Serves: 8 – 4 ounce servings