



# Fat Facts

With so much concern about overweight, obesity, elevated cholesterol, and heart disease, the truth about fat can get confusing. The bottom line is that you need fat in your diet.

Here are some quick fat facts to help you figure out how much fat is right for you.

**Fiction:** Fat is bad for you.

**Fact:** While there seems to be a phobia about eating fat, fat has important functions in the body and should be part of a healthy diet.

Your body uses dietary fat for

- absorbing essential fat-soluble vitamins
- protecting your organs from damage or your bones from breaking if you fall or get bumped
- providing extra energy;
- insulating you from the cold and heat
- helping you feel full and satisfied after a meal
- making food taste good

While some fat in your diet is necessary, too much can lead to overweight and elevated cholesterol and lipid levels.

**Fiction:** Most people eat too much fat.

**Fact:** Everyone has their own individual fat needs based on energy intake and expenditure as well as medical history of heart disease, cholesterol, or lipid levels. The American Heart Association recommends people eat a diet of approximately 30 percent fat. The table below can help you determine your fat intake needs. Remember, too low a fat intake is also not advisable. If you or someone you know routinely eats 20 grams of fat per day or less, speak with a registered dietitian.

DAILY ENERGY NEEDS (calories)	DAILY FAT NEEDS (grams)
1,600	53
1,800	60
2,000	67
2,200	73
2,400	80
2,600	87
2,800	93
3,000	100
3,200	107

**Fiction:** Butter and dressing is bad for me. I don't need to add any fat to my food; there is enough in it already.

## Contact

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**Fact:** Most people can eat three to five teaspoons of fat added to foods plus the fat that is in foods and still be within their fat allowance for the day. The key is moderation. It is best to have fat from a variety of sources. Some fats like olive oil, nuts, seeds, and other oils are better for you than animal fats like butter or lard. Here are some ideas for getting the best fats into your diet without overdoing it.

- Don't eliminate all fats. Your body needs some essential fats for important functions.
- Balance out your fat intake. Choose baked or broiled foods more often than those that are fried. When eating fried foods, try to balance the rest of your meal with plain fruits, vegetables, and other lower-fat items.
- Choose high-fiber bran or oatmeal muffins made with walnuts or sunflower seeds.
- Add peanut butter to your toast or bagel instead of butter, margarine, or cream cheese.
- Trim visible fat and skin from meats and select lean cuts of meat, chicken, or fish over higher-fat proteins like hot dogs, bologna, or fried and breaded meats.
- Add nuts and granola to cereal, yogurt, or trail mix. Nuts are great sources of monounsaturated fats, which can help protect your heart.

**Fiction:** Trying to lose weight quickly is the best way to lose body fat.

**Fact:** A slower weight loss of one-half to one pound a week has been shown to better preserve lean body tissue and be more successful in the long run. Strict, low-calorie diets usually cause the body to lose lean tissue and slow metabolism. Moderation, in both intake and exercise, is key to long-term successful weight loss.