

Fats in Foods for Children: What Do We Need to Know?

Lowering Fat Intake

Lowering fat content in our food is a good idea. Eating lots of fat can add too many calories. As a result, eating foods high in fat content can add to weight gain over time (and may lead to diabetes at an early age) and add to unhealthy eating habits and lifestyles. However, children do need some fat from foods to be healthy. What do we need to know about fats in foods for children?



Children need some fat from food in order to have energy to play, learn, and grow. Fats also provide vitamins from food and add flavor to foods.

** Infants and toddlers under two are not advised to eat low-fat diets. Young children under the age of two need more fat for brain development than those over the age of two years.*

Good Energy

Good food energy comes from whole grains (bread, pasta, and rice), vegetables, fruits, low-fat dairy, beans, lean meat and poultry, fish, eggs, or nuts. Try planning meals and snacks from high-energy food sources such as these.

What We Need to Know

Eating less saturated fat and trans fats is a good idea. Saturated fats, such as butter, stick margarine, and fat in meat,

***Always know of children's allergies to food and choking hazards of food. The USDA recommends not offering eggs to children younger than eight months, and not offering egg whites to children younger than one year because of infant allergic reactions.**

are solid at room temperature. Trans fats come from the addition of hydrogen to liquid oils, making them more solid (a process called hydrogenation). A small amount of trans fat is found

naturally in some animal-based foods. Consumption of trans fat raises LDL cholesterol—the so-called “bad” cholesterol. Trans fat is often found in margarines, chips, crackers, cookies, cakes, and fried foods.

Choose to limit foods with saturated fat and trans fats. Eating a lot of saturated fat or trans fats increases the chance of heart disease later in life. Learning a habit of low-fat eating is healthful; avoiding all fats is not.

Good News about Food Labels

The nutrition facts you find on food labels gives you information about which nutrients are in the food. Take time to review what information is on food labels and how to interpret that information. Current food labels show amounts of saturated fats and trans fats (and also whether products contain common food allergens). Good resources to use in understanding Nutrition Facts are the United States Department of Agriculture, the American Dietetic Association, and The United States Food and Drug Administration.

The Food and Drug Administration's final rule on trans fatty acids (also called "trans fat") requires that the amount of trans fat in a serving be listed on a separate line under saturated fat on the Nutrition Facts panel (see figure). However, trans fat does not have to be listed if the total fat in a food is less than 0.5 gram (or 1/2 gram) per serving and no

claims are made about fat, fatty acids, or cholesterol content. If it is not listed, a footnote will be added stating that the food is "not a significant source of trans fat."

Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods, especially those with less saturated and trans fats. Try comparing similar foods and choose foods with lower combined saturated and trans fat. The USDA recommends that 30 percent of daily calorie intake come from fat

(total) and no more than 10 percent of calories come from saturated fats.

Sample Label for Macaroni and Cheese			
Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1 cup (228g) Servings Per Container 2			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110		
% Daily Value*			
Total Fat 12g		18%	
Saturated Fat 3g		15%	
Trans Fat 1.5g			
Cholesterol 30mg		10%	
Sodium 470mg		20%	
Total Carbohydrate 31g		10%	
Dietary Fiber 0g		0%	
Sugars 5g			
Protein 5g			
Vitamin A		4%	
Vitamin C		2%	
Calcium		20%	
Iron		4%	
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Start Here

Limit these Nutrients

Get Enough of these Nutrients

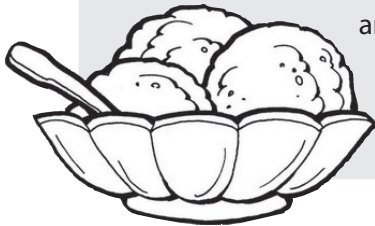
Footnote

Quick Guide to % DV

5% or less is low
20% or more is high

Learn to be Flexible

While it is important to maintain low-fat diets for those over two years of age, it is also important to add flexibility. Children can enjoy a small bowl of ice cream or small order of fries occasionally. Balance is the key: Offer foods with less fat the next day, and provide healthy, low saturated and trans fat choices on a regular basis.



A Good Example!

It's important that children experience low-fat eating not only in their individual meals and snacks, but also as family style eating, either at home or in child care. Children should see the adults who care for them eating the same low-fat foods.

PENNSTATE



College of Agricultural Sciences
Cooperative Extension

Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director

Developed by Christine Belinda, Penn State Better Kid Care Program
253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA 16801 • Phone: 1-800-452-9108 • Website: betterkidcare.psu.edu

Supported by funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Office of Child Development.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

Penn State is committed to affirmative action, equal opportunity, and the diversity of its work force.

*Sources:

http://kidshealth.org/kid/stay_healthy/food/labels.html

http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/Topics/food_labels.html

<http://www.eatright.org>

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/transfat.html#main>