

The Skinny on Fats

When receiving the meal plan everyone is asked to decrease intake of 'bad' fats and increase intake of 'good' fats. Below, the different kinds of fats are described, including what they do in our body, what foods you should avoid and what foods you should incorporate into your diet.

Trans fats:



What are they?

Trans fats can be made from vegetable oil through a process called hydrogenation. Hydrogen atoms are added to the fat to make the liquid more solid (the consistency of butter or margarine). Trans fats are inexpensive to produce, and they add shelf life and flavour- making them a popular choice for processed foods.

What do they do?

Trans fat is the worst of the worst. It increases our bad cholesterol (LDL) and decreases our good cholesterol (HDL). LDL delivers cholesterol to the walls of our arteries, making it more difficult for blood to pass through. HDL competes with LDL to bind cholesterol. If there is too much LDL the HDL cannot do its job and remove the cholesterol from our bodies. Trans fats contribute to blood vessel inflammation and increase the risk of heart disease. They fall into the bad fat family.

Where do you find them?

-in deep fried food and processed foods (cookies, doughnuts, fast food etc.)

Saturated fats:

What are they?

There are many different kinds of saturated fats and they tend to be solid at room temperature. They can be packed tightly together because they don't have any bulky branches of molecules (think of saturated fats as popsicle sticks, it is easier to pack popsicle sticks together than tree branches).

What do they do?

Saturated fats increase the levels of LDL (the bad cholesterol) in the blood. Like trans fats, they contribute to the risk of heart disease.

Where do you find them?

-high fat meats and dairy products, palm oil, coconut oil (the latter two are usually found in processed baked goods and fried foods)



Unsaturated fats

What are they?

Unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature. They cannot be tightly packed together like saturated fats because their components are branched (think trees).

What do they do?

Polyunsaturated fats lower total cholesterol and also work on lowering LDL cholesterol (once again, the bad cholesterol). Less of the LDL means less cholesterol build up in the arteries- a good thing. Monounsaturated fats not only lower total cholesterol and LDL cholesterol but maintain HDL cholesterol (the good cholesterol). These fats lower the risk of heart disease, stroke, immune and inflammatory disorders. They are the good fats.

Where do you find them?

-polyunsaturated fats- fish (salmon, tuna, sardines), almonds, walnuts, corn, soy and sunflower oils, flax seed oil
-monounsaturated fats- olive oil, avocado, peanuts, almonds



What can you do?

Start reading food labels (see Bariatric Educator Katie's post for a quick 'how to'). Find out the foods and products that contain trans and saturated fats. Ideally you don't want to consume any foods that contain trans fats- so look for 0 grams on the food label. You also want to limit saturated fat

intake. Limiting or eliminating intake of processed and fried foods (items that really aren't providing any nutrient value) will help decrease intake of both trans and saturated fats. Choosing low fat dairy products and lean meats will also help limit saturated fat intake. Furthermore, cook with oils high in unsaturated fat instead of foods high in saturated (cook with olive oil instead of butter or margarine). Try to have to have more fish, avocado, almonds, peanut butter, and flax seed (oil or ground). Keeping in mind however, you still need to ensure your total fat intake (whether it be good or bad fats) is below the fat target on your meal plan. If you have any questions ask a Bariatric Educator- we can help!

Resources:

http://www.dietitians.ca/news/frm_resource/imageserver.asp?id=842&document_type=document&popup=true&contentid=8435

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/trans-eng.php>

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=37>