

# Dietary Fats and Heart Disease



Fats in food are a mixture of three different types known as:

- saturated fat
- polyunsaturated fat
- monounsaturated fat.

The different types of fat have different effects on blood cholesterol levels.



## Saturated fat

Saturated fat is the type of fat which raises blood cholesterol levels. High total blood cholesterol is one of the main risk factors for heart disease. To reduce your blood cholesterol level it is important to reduce your intake of foods high in saturated fat such as:

- fatty meats
- full fat dairy products
- butter
- two vegetable oils – coconut and palm oil
- most deep fried take-away foods
- most commercially baked products such as biscuits and pastries.



## Polyunsaturated fat

Polyunsaturated fats help lower blood cholesterol if your meals are low in saturated fat. Foods that contain polyunsaturated fat include:

- polyunsaturated margarine spreads
- polyunsaturated oils, e.g. sunflower, safflower and soybean oils
- fish
- nuts, e.g. walnuts, hazelnuts and brazil nuts
- seeds.



## Monounsaturated fat

Monounsaturated fats can also help lower blood cholesterol if your meals are low in saturated fat. Foods that contain monounsaturated fat include:

- monounsaturated margarine spreads, e.g. canola or olive oil based
- monounsaturated oils, e.g. olive, canola and peanut oils
- nuts, e.g. peanuts, cashews and almonds
- seeds
- avocado.

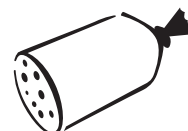


**Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats both reduce blood cholesterol, but like all fats are high in kilojoules, so enjoy them in moderation.**

### **What about cholesterol in food?**

People with high blood cholesterol or who are at risk of heart disease should also try to limit their intake of cholesterol-rich foods. Dietary cholesterol is only found in animal products such as:

- full fat dairy products
- fatty meats
- egg yolks
- offal, e.g. liver, kidney and brains.



### **Healthy eating to lower blood cholesterol**

- Use margarine spreads instead of butter or dairy blends.
- Use a variety of oils for cooking - some suitable choices include canola, sunflower, soybean, olive and peanut oils.
- Use salad dressings and mayonnaise made from oils such as canola, sunflower, soybean and olive oils.
- Choose low or reduced fat milk and yoghurt or 'added calcium' soy beverages. Try to limit cheese and ice-cream to twice a week.
- Have fish (any type of fresh or canned) at least twice a week.
- Select lean meat (meat trimmed of fat and chicken without skin). Try to limit fatty meats including sausages and delicatessen meats such as salami.
- Snack on plain, unsalted nuts and fresh fruit.
- Incorporate dried peas (e.g. split peas), dried beans (e.g. haricot beans, kidney beans), canned beans (e.g. baked beans, three bean mix) or lentils into two meals a week.
- Make vegetables, and grain based foods such as breakfast cereals, bread, pasta, noodles and rice the major part of each meal.
- Try to limit take-away foods to once a week. Take-away foods include pastries, pies, pizza, hamburgers and creamy pasta dishes.
  - Try to limit snack foods such as potato crisps and corn crisps to once a week.
    - Try to limit cakes, pastries and chocolate or creamy biscuits to once a week.
    - Try to limit cholesterol-rich foods such as egg yolks and offal e.g. liver, kidney and brains.



---

For further information contact Heartline, the Heart Foundation's national telephone information service, on **1300 36 27 87**, or visit **[www.heartfoundation.com.au](http://www.heartfoundation.com.au)**.

If you want specific dietary information call **1800 81 29 42** to find an Accredited Practising Dietitian near you.

February 2004