

# Understanding Dietary Fat

There are different kinds of fats in the foods you eat. Fats can be saturated or unsaturated. Planning meals that are low in saturated fat helps reduce the level of cholesterol in your blood. Too much cholesterol in your blood can lead to blocked arteries. To prevent heart problems, keep your cholesterol levels in healthy ranges. A healthy goal is to have less than 30% of your daily calories come from fat. Instead of fats, eat more fruits, grains, and vegetables. and when you do use fat, choose unsaturated fats.



## Limit Saturated Fats

Saturated fats are fats that come from animals and certain plants (such as coconut and palm). Eating saturated fat can raise your blood cholesterol level and increase your artery problems. Your goal is to eat less saturated fat. Below are some examples of foods that contain lots of saturated fat:

- Fatty cuts of meat (lamb, ham, beef)
- Cookies and cakes
- Cream, ice cream, sour cream, cheese, butter
- Desserts with butter and cream
- Sauces with butter and cream
- Salad dressings with saturated fats
- Foods that contain palm or coconut oil

## Limit Trans Fat

Like saturated fat, **trans fat** is linked to heart disease. Trans fat is found in unsaturated fats that have been modified to be solid at room temperature. Margarine, which is often made from vegetable oil, is a good example. Trans fat is often found in cookies, pastry, and other products. Check food labels for trans fat. Also look on the ingredients list for hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils.

## Choose Unsaturated Fats

Unsaturated fats are usually liquid at room temperature. They are better choices than saturated fats. In

fact, in moderate amounts unsaturated fat can be good for your heart. There are two types of unsaturated fats:

- **Polyunsaturated fats** are found in corn oil, safflower oil, sunflower oil, and other vegetable oils.
- **Monounsaturated fats** are found in olive oil, canola oil, and peanut oil. Some margarines and spreads are now made with these oils, too. Of all fats, monounsaturated fats are the least harmful to your heart.