Nutrition for Low Fat

Fat is a nutrient that gets a lot of negative attention, but we do need some fat in our diets to maintain good health. In addition to helping food taste good, dietary fat provides us with energy, essential fatty acids and helps us absorb fat soluble vitamins, A, D, E and K.

The amount of fat we need depends on many factors such as our age and calorie needs. Aim to keep your total fat intake between 20-35% of your calories. (For someone on a 2000 calorie diet, this would equal 44- 78 grams of fat/day.) Aim to limit saturated fat intake to less than 10% of your calories. (This would be 20 grams or less per day for someone on a 2000 calorie diet.) As for trans-fats, keep those as low as possible. Consult a registered dietitian or qualified health professional for further, individualized recommendations.

When considering fat in your diet, it is important to pay attention to both the amount and type as not all fats are created equal. Most of the fat in your diet should come from unsaturated fats including poly and monounsaturated fats. Polyunsaturated fats, found in fish and various oils such as corn, safflower, sunflower, soybean and sesame, help to lower total blood cholesterol, when used in place of saturated fats. Monounsaturated fats, found in olive oil and canola oil, help to lower "bad" LDL cholesterol and also increase "good" HDL cholesterol when used in place of saturated fats.

If looking to follow a low fat diet, avoid higher fat meats, whole fat dairy foods, and processed foods with trans-fats as well as tropical oils such as palm and coconut oil.

Caution: Since fat adds flavor to foods, when fat is reduced, sugar and/or sodium is often added to make up for it. Avoid foods higher in sugar and/or sodium even if lower in fat.

This medical and/or nutritional information is not intended to be a substitute for individual advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.