

Moderation in Eating the Right Type of Fats

So dietary fat isn't so bad after all. . .as long as we eat the right types in moderation. What does this mean?

The 1990s brought the low-fat craze, based on logical belief that if we reduced the *amount* of fat in the diet, we'd also shrink the growing waistlines of many Americans. Today, however, we are confronted with an expanding epidemic of obesity among adults and youth alike. Obesity is fully implicated for its role in increasing risk of complicated chronic diseases as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension and certain cancers. Apparently, the low-fat frenzy backfired.

Based on important scientific discoveries over the past decade, we now know that while a *high fat* diet can contribute to our disease risk and growing body size, *moderate amounts* of the *right types* of fat can actually promote good health and reduce the risk of many of these diseases.

The big questions: what are the “right types” and how much is “moderate”?

Moderation defined:

According to the National Academies of Sciences' new recommendations on diet and exercise, a healthy diet should consist of 20-35% of total daily calories from healthy fats depending on individual needs. Individuals should limit or avoid saturated and trans-fats.

Consistently eating *above* or *below* this range has been associated with *increased risk* of certain diseases.

Types of fat:

| <i>Healthy fats</i> | <i>Food Sources</i> |
|---|---|
| Polyunsaturated fats: <i>Omega-3</i> <i>Goal: 1.6 g/day men</i> <i>1.1 g/day women</i> <i>(Adequate intake)</i> | Seaweed, flaxseeds, deep, cold water fish like salmon and mackerel. |
| <i>Omega-6</i> <i>Goal: 17 g/day men</i> <i>12 g/day women</i> <i>(Adequate intake)</i> | Vegetable oils like Canola and Sunflower, and nuts. |
| Monounsaturated fats: <i>Goal: Approx. 10%</i> | Olive oil, olives, avocado, and nuts (especially walnuts). |

| Unhealthy fats | Food Sources |
|---|---|
| Saturated fats: <i>Goal: Limit or avoid.</i> | Foods of animal origin like meat, poultry, and fish; also eggs and butter. |
| Trans-fats: <i>Goal: Limit or avoid.</i> | Commonly in refined, packaged bakery products and margarines that say “hydrogenated” on the ingredient label. |

Moderate consumption of healthy fats has been associated with lower cholesterol levels, improved blood sugar control, reduced heart disease risk and several other factors impacting good health. Replacing unhealthy fats in the diet with healthy fats and focusing on whole food sources like fish, avocado, nuts and healthy oils can provide good nutrition and eliminate some of the harmful effects of unhealthy fats on the body.

References:

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