

Dietary fats affect your lipid results

Cholesterol and triglyceride levels (lipid results) are strongly influenced by the foods we eat, especially fats and oils. Our family history (genetics), body weight and how much exercise we do also plays a part in this.

All fats and oils should be eaten in moderation, as they are high in calories and eating too much of them can cause weight gain and increase the chance of health problems. However, some types of fats are healthier to eat than others and knowing the difference between them is important for making healthy food choices.



Trans fats are not a healthy type of fat and should be avoided. They increase LDL cholesterol and decrease HDL cholesterol, which is the opposite of what we want. Most trans fats are made during food manufacturing, meaning they may be found in processed and fried foods.



Saturated fats should only be eaten in small amounts, as they increase LDL cholesterol. Saturated fats are mainly found in foods that come from animals (e.g. meat, dairy products) but coconut and palm oil also contain large amounts. Most of us need to reduce the amount of saturated fat we eat.



Unsaturated fats are the best type of fat to eat and are an important part of a healthy diet (although you still don't need too much). Most unsaturated fats are in foods that come from plants (e.g. olive oil, avocados). Omega-3 is an important type of unsaturated fat that is found in large amounts in oily fish and other seafood, as well as some types of nuts and seeds.



Replace "bad" fats with "good" fats

Check food product labels to see how much and what type(s) of fat they contain. Replacing trans fats and saturated fats with unsaturated fats is the best way to improve your lipid profile, as it helps to reduce both LDL cholesterol and triglycerides.

 Trans fats (avoid) May be found in fried foods, vegetable shortening, packaged snack foods, crackers and biscuits, baked goods (can also be called "hydrogenated vegetable oil"). <i>Not all brands of these products contain trans fats – check labels.</i>  Saturated fats (limit) Found in meat (red and processed), cheese, butter, cream, coconut cream, palm oil, coconut oil, takeaways (e.g. pizza, burgers), baked goods and sweets (e.g. pies, biscuits, cakes, pastries)	Replace with 	 Unsaturated fats Monounsaturated fats Nuts, olives, avocados, olive oil, avocado oil, safflower oil, canola oil Polyunsaturated fats • Omega-3 Salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines, mussels, chia and flax seeds, nuts, linseed oil, canola oil • Omega-6 Nuts, seeds, grapeseed oil, soybean oil, corn oil, sesame oil, rice bran oil, some margarines
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Making healthy food choices

You can make changes to your diet and cooking to help improve your lipid profile (cholesterol levels).

To reduce the amount of fat you eat (particularly trans and saturated fats):

- Use low-fat cooking methods, e.g. grilling, baking, steaming, air-frying
- Use only a small amount of plant-based oil, e.g. canola oil, olive oil, cooking spray, when needed instead of animal-based fats, e.g. butter, ghee, tallow, lard
- Choose lean meats or remove visible fat from meat prior to cooking, e.g. trim the white parts off meat, remove skin from chicken
- Replace full fat milk ("blue milk") with lower fat milk, e.g. "light blue" or "green" top
- Replace butter with a monounsaturated or polyunsaturated margarine or other plant-based spread
- Avoid foods that contain "hydrogenated vegetable oil" or "partially hydrogenated vegetable oil", as these are other names for trans fats
- Be aware that fat may be "hidden" in pies, pastries, cakes and biscuits

Eating a healthy, balanced diet is also important for a healthy lipid profile. Aim to:

Eat more:		Why?
	Fibre Legumes (e.g. beans, peas, lentils), fruit, vegetables, nuts, seeds, whole grains (e.g. oats, brown rice), wholegrain bread, barley, wholemeal pasta	Reduces LDL cholesterol
	Sterols Fruit, vegetables, nuts, grains and legumes, margarines with added plant sterols	Reduces LDL cholesterol
	Oily fish (omega-3) Canned or fresh salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines	Reduces triglycerides
Eat less:		Why?
	Sugar Soft drink ("fizzy"), fruit juice, cordial, energy drinks, sweets, baked goods	Large amounts increase triglycerides
	Refined carbohydrates White rice, pasta, white bread, processed snack foods, baked goods	Large amounts increase triglycerides and decrease HDL cholesterol
	Alcohol	Increases triglycerides



Regular exercise and keeping a healthy body weight can help increase HDL cholesterol, reduce LDL cholesterol and triglycerides, and decrease your chance of heart disease and other health problems



Read the nutritional information on products

In New Zealand, the amounts of total fat and saturated fat that a food contains must be written on the packaging. By comparing "nutrition information" panels on similar foods, you can choose the item with the lowest levels and healthiest types of fat. You can also see which foods have less sugar and salt (sodium), helping you make healthier choices overall.



Apps that let you scan product barcodes to find out more about their nutritional information, e.g. FoodSwitch, KaiWise, can help make this easier

Don't forget about serving size; some "single serve" products contain multiple servings



Less "S" is best:

- Saturated fat
- Sugar
- Sodium (salt)

Even foods labelled with "no added sugar" can naturally contain lots so it's always best to check

Ingredients are listed by quantity in descending order, i.e. from largest amount to smallest amount

Use this column to compare similar foods

NUTRITION INFORMATION

Servings per package: 3		Serving size: 150 g
Average quantity :	Per serving	Per 100 g
Energy	616 kJ	411 kJ
Protein	7.2 g	4.8 g
Fat, total	4.8 g	3.2 g
– saturated	4.5 g	3.0 g
Carbohydrates	18.6 g	12.4 g
– sugars	18.6 g	12.4 g
Sodium	90 mg	60 mg

Ingredients: Whole milk, concentrated skim milk, sugar, strawberries (7%), gelatine, culture, thickener (1442).

Sugar can also be called other names, e.g. corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, maltose



Some packaged foods have a Health Star Rating that can be used to compare them to similar products.

More stars mean that a product has less saturated fat, sugar and salt and more healthy nutrients and ingredients.