

Low-fat Diet Sheet

A diet that is generally low in fat and healthy can help you to lose weight, or maintain your weight. It can also help to you to lower your cholesterol level.

Example of a diet sheet

Food Type	Foods that can be eaten regularly (little or no fat and/or 'healthy' foods)	Foods to be eaten in moderation	Foods to avoid or to eat rarely (high in fat and/or 'unhealthy' foods)
Cereal foods	Wholemeal flour and bread Porridge oats High-fibre breakfast cereals Wholegrain rice and pasta	White flour and bread Low-fibre breakfast cereals White rice and pasta Plain biscuits Plain or fruit scones	Croissants Fried bread Most cakes and biscuits Pastries Suet pudding
Fruit, veg and nuts	All fresh and frozen vegetables and fruit Dried beans and lentils Baked potatoes Dried fruit Walnuts	Oven chips Avocados Olives Almonds Pecans Hazelnuts	Chips Fried or roast potatoes Fried, creamed, buttered or cheesy vegetables Crisps and potato snacks Coconut Brazils Roasted peanuts
Fish	All white fish Oily fish such as herring, mackerel, sardines, kippers, pilchards, or salmon (not tinned in oil)	Shellfish	Fish roe Caviar
Meat	Lean white meat such as chicken and turkey breast (without skin)	Lean ham, beef, pork, and lamb Lean mince Liver and kidney	Visible fat on meat Crackling Sausages Pâtés Duck, goose Meat pies/pasties
Eggs, dairy foods	Skimmed or semi-skimmed milk Cottage or curd cheese Low-fat yoghurt Egg whites	Edam Camembert Parmesan Up to 3 egg yolks a week	Whole milk Cream Ice cream Most hard cheeses Chocolate Cream cheese
Fats and spreads	None	Low-fat spreads Margarine high in polyunsaturates Corn oil, sunflower oil and olive oil	Butter Dripping and lard Margarine not high in polyunsaturates
Drinks and soups	Tea and coffee Mineral water Fruit juices	Packet soups Alcoholic drinks	Cream soups Milky drinks Sugary drinks

Low-fat diets and weight loss or weight maintenance

The list of foods above is just a guide as to the best sorts of foods to eat that in general contain less fat and calories 'weight for weight' or 'portion for portion'.

If you want to lose weight, you need to eat fewer calories per day than you have been eating (or do more exercise). In general, foods high in fat contain a lot of calories. However, there are other foods that contain a lot of calories. In particular, sweets and sugar do not contain fat, but are high in calories. Therefore, in addition to a low-fat diet, you also have to watch out for other types of foods such as sweets and sugary foods.

See separate leaflets called *'Healthy Eating'* for a more general overview of food and health, and *'Weight Reduction - How to Lose Weight'* which gives advice if you are planning to lose weight.

More about fats

Not all fat is bad! Although all fats are high in calories, we need some fat in our diet, and some types of fat are actually good for our health. The different types of fat include the following:

Saturated fats

These are mainly found in the harder fats such as the fat on meat, lard, and the fat in dairy products such as butter, full-cream milk, etc. There are also fats called 'trans fats' (hydrogenated vegetable oils). These are oils which come from vegetables but have been processed to make them hard and similar to saturated fats. They are often used in processed foods, and in commercially made cakes, biscuits and pastries.

We should try to limit our intake of saturated fats and trans fats, as they contribute to weight gain and a raised cholesterol level.

Unsaturated fats

These mainly come from vegetables, nuts and fruits. They are divided into:

- Polyunsaturated fats such as sunflower oil, and corn oil.
- Mono-unsaturated fats such as olive oil and rapeseed oil.
- Omega 3 fatty acids. These come mainly from oily fish such as pilchards, sardines, salmon mackerel and fresh (not tinned) tuna. Some omega 3 fatty acids are found in various plant foods and vegetable oils.

Unsaturated fats are 'good fats' as they are less likely to raise your cholesterol level. Omega 3 fatty acids are also thought to help prevent heart disease and may help to improve our health in other ways. See separate leaflet called '*Cholesterol*' which gives more details about reducing your cholesterol level.

Food labels

Foods that contain fat often contain a mixture of saturated and unsaturated fats. Food labels often list the amounts of each type of fat in the food (or at least how much of the fat in the food is saturated). As a rule, we should aim to limit our intake of saturated fats, and when we use fats and oils, mainly to choose those high in unsaturates. Food labels also show how many calories are in the food. So, it may be a good idea to get into the habit of reading food labels when you shop.

References

- [Obesity](#), NICE Clinical Guideline (2006); *Obesity: the prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children*

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