

Australian Oilseed Federation

Nutrition Fact Sheets



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How Much Fat Should We Eat?

Fat - how much and what type should I eat - is a question often asked.

With the recent emphasis on low-fat diets and fat-free foods, fat has been banished from the meals of the health conscious.

There are no official recommended intakes for fat, as there are for protein, vitamins and minerals. Instead nutrition authorities usually suggest you aim for 25 to 30 per cent of the kilojoules you consume to be in the form of fat.

This is a healthy level of intake, one where you can meet your body's needs for fat without overloading it with unwanted kilojoules.

This translates to

50-60 grams of fat a day	for an adult female who's not on a diet (6000kJ/1500 calories)
70-80 grams of fat a day	for an adult male who's not on a diet (8000kJ/2000 calories)
40 grams of fat a day	for an adult female who wants weight loss (5000kJ/1200 calories)

Don't cut out all fat

A small quantity of fat is essential to health. We need to consume 'healthy' types of fat to insulate our internal organs, carry fat-soluble vitamins and antioxidants such as beta-carotene and provide the building blocks for the brain, eye and nerve tissues (the brain contains 60 per cent fat, mainly as omega 3's.)

In contrast, too much fat has its negatives. It:

- is kilojoule-dense. At 37 kilojoules per gram, fat has twice as many kilojoules as carbohydrate or protein.
- is easy to over consume.
- is more efficiently stored than either protein or carbohydrate.
- saturated fat is the 'bad fat' which can raise your risk of high cholesterol and certain cancers.

Tips for choosing the healthy fats

1. Cut down your intake of saturates from bacon, salami, deli meats, sausages, butter, cream and fast foods.
2. Add some of the following 'good fats' to your meals:

Good fats	Fat (g)
Avocado, half	22
Oil - all types, 1 tablespoon	20
Nuts, 30 g	18
Hummous, 2 tablespoons	20
Wheatgerm, 1 tablespoon	18
Margarine, 1 tablespoon	16

- 3 'Fat-free' foods like bars and muffins aren't necessarily better for you than regular versions. To make up the flavour loss, they are often higher in starch or sugars, which gives them the same kilojoule count as the full-fat version.
- 4 The 'Vegetable oil' used to make crisps, snack foods and biscuits is usually palm oil, an economical tropical oil with a long shelf life. Companies use it because it is inexpensive and keeps well. However, it is 50 per cent saturated and is therefore one to avoid.