



Cut Down on Saturated Fats

Limiting saturated fats is important for your health — and it doesn't mean you have to cut down on flavor. Learn how to swap out saturated fats for healthier options.

The *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommends limiting calories from saturated fats to less than 10% of the total calories you eat and drink each day. That's about 200 calories for a 2,000 calorie diet.

What are saturated fats?

Saturated fats are one type of fat in the foods we eat and the beverages we drink. Most come from animal products, like dairy, meat, and poultry. To limit the amount of saturated fats you eat, choose lower-fat and lean options of dairy, meat, and poultry — like skim milk, lean beef, and grilled chicken breast without the skin.

Eating too many foods high in saturated fats can be bad for your health. By replacing saturated fats with unsaturated fats, you may lower your risk of getting heart disease.

What foods and beverages are higher in saturated fats?

- Meats higher in fat, like beef ribs, sausage, and some processed meats
- Higher-fat dairy, like regular-fat cheeses and whole or 2% milk
- Butter, stick margarine, cream, and cream cheese
- Some tropical oils, like coconut and palm kernel oil
- Cakes, cookies, and some snack foods

Dishes with many ingredients — like pizza, casseroles, burgers, tacos, and sandwiches — tend to have ingredients that are high in saturated fats.

Choose ingredients for these dishes that are low in saturated fats — like vegetables, whole grains, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, most oils, and lean cuts of meats and poultry.

What are *unsaturated* fats?

Unsaturated fats are found in some foods and most oils. There are 2 types of unsaturated fats: monounsaturated fatty acids (MUFA) and polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA).

While saturated fats have health risks, unsaturated fats have health *benefits*.

Focus on getting unsaturated fats from:

- Seafood (like salmon, trout, herring, tuna, and mackerel)
- Walnuts, almonds, cashews, and most other nuts
- Sesame, pumpkin, and flax seeds
- Olive, canola, peanut, sunflower, safflower, corn, soybean, and cottonseed oils*
- Avocados

* The *Dietary Guidelines* recommends that adult women get 1.5–2 tablespoons and adult men get 2–2.5 tablespoons of oils each day.



How can I cut down on saturated fats?

The best strategy is not just to limit saturated fats — it's also to **replace them with healthier unsaturated fats.**

Studies show that swapping saturated fats for unsaturated fats may have health benefits. It can help lower “bad” LDL cholesterol in the blood. It may also lower the risk of heart disease.

Here are 3 things you can do.

1. Find out how many calories from saturated fats you're getting now.

You can use USDA's SuperTracker (<https://supertracker.usda.gov>) to get an idea. If it's more than 10% of your daily calories, find small changes you can make today and build on over time.

2. Check the Nutrition Facts label.

The label shows **total fat** broken out by **saturated fat and trans fat.** Labels may also list monounsaturated fatty acids and polyunsaturated fatty acids. These are types of unsaturated fats.

Pay attention to the specific types of fats listed. Choose options that are lower in or have no saturated fats and *trans* fats or have unsaturated fats instead.

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Values*	
Total Fat 8g	16%
Saturated Fat 1g	2%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

3. Make some healthy shifts.

Replace foods and beverages higher in saturated fats with healthier options.



Cook with olive oil instead of butter or stick margarine



Go for grilled chicken breast (without the skin) instead of fried



Have fruit salad instead of ice cream for dessert

You can still have some foods and beverages with saturated fats — just choose smaller portions or have them less often. For example, you can:

- Replace some of the meat or poultry in your taco recipe with fish, beans, or other vegetables
- Use less meat and more vegetables to make a stir fry cooked with a small amount of oil
- Limit desserts to special occasions and use small bowls and plates to encourage smaller portions

What about *trans* fats?

Like saturated fats, *trans* fats may increase the risk of heart disease.

Food companies have lowered the amount of **artificial trans** fats they add to foods. But there may still be some artificial *trans* fats in packaged foods like snacks, desserts, frozen pizzas, margarine, and more.

The Dietary Guidelines recommends eating and drinking as few artificial *trans* fats as possible.

Small amounts of **natural trans** fats are in dairy and meat.

The Dietary Guidelines recommends lowering how many natural *trans* fats you get by choosing fat-free or low-fat dairy and lean meats and poultry.

Want to learn more about saturated fats and how to build a healthy eating pattern that works for you? Check out DietaryGuidelines.gov for more information on the *Dietary Guidelines* and ChooseMyPlate.gov for online tools, recipes, and more.

