



# 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.



### 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

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

## 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.



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