



Managing Fats In Your Diet

- AHA recommends no more than 5-6% of calories from saturated fat (about 13 gms for a 2000 calories/day diet). Solid fat (butter, lard, margarine) is quite saturated, is difficult to digest, and should be avoided when possible. Cream is the same fat as butter; however, it is in a water solution and much easier to digest.
- Trans fat is a poison and should be totally avoided. Don't be fooled by the 0% trans fat claim as the government allows companies to claim 0% as long as the percent is not over 0.5%. Trans fat appears as partially hydrogenated vegetable oil in a product's ingredients list, so study labels and avoid trans fat!
- Two fatty acids are essential to obtain in our food because we cannot make them in our body: linoleic acid (omega-6) and alpha linolenic acid (omega-3). A plant-based diet provides sufficient linoleic acid. Getting alpha linolenic acid is more challenging, but canola oil, soybean oil, chia seeds, flax seeds, walnuts contain it. Many other foods including green leafy vegetables provide it in lesser amounts. From alpha linolenic acid your body makes the longer chain omega-3 fatty acids you need, so there is no need to eat fish. But if you like fish stick with the clean fish that have fins and scales. The unclean fish eat other fish as a rule and tend to build up high levels of mercury.
- Use coconut oil with moderation. It is highly saturated but not like other saturated fat as the molecules are shorter and remain liquid at room temperature. We do not have a definitive answer on whether it increases the risk of atherosclerosis.
- A gram of fat has twice the calories of a gram of sugar; therefore, if one does not get a great deal of exercise it is not wise to eat largely of fat. There is a rule known in medical science: 10 grams of fat in solid food takes an additional hour to digest. Fifteen almonds contain about 10 grams of fat and can be expected to add an hour to the digestion of a meal. (Surprisingly one study shows that adding nuts to one's diet does not cause an increase in weight.)
- A small amount of fat is a great way to improve the palatability of vegetables. We find a tablespoon or two of olive oil and a dash of salt added to frozen vegetables makes a tasty dish.
- We also enjoy whole grain raisin bread buttered with almond butter.