

understanding **Weight Loss and Dietary Fats**



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Are weight loss problems solved if we just eliminate fat from our diets? Unfortunately not! Consumed in excess, fats contribute to weight gain, heart disease and certain types of cancer, but we need fats to help nutrient absorption, nerve transmission, keep our skin soft, deliver fat-soluble vitamins and for energy. Some fats promote health while others increase risk. The key is to replace bad fats with good fats in our diet!

The Good Fats

Monounsaturated fats (MUFAs) lower cholesterol, especially bad cholesterol (LDL), while increasing good cholesterol (HDL). Foods high in MUFAs, including peanuts, walnuts, almonds and pistachios, avocado and olive oil, have been found to help in weight loss.

Polyunsaturated fats also lower LDL cholesterol. Salmon and fish oil, as well as corn, soy, safflower and sunflower oils, are high in polyunsaturated fats. One type of polyunsaturated fat is omega-3 fatty acids, the potential heart health benefits of which have received a lot of attention and can be found in fatty fish (salmon, trout, mackerel), as well as flaxseed and walnuts.

The Bad Fats

Saturated fats raise total

blood cholesterol as well as LDL cholesterol. Some foods high in saturated fats are meat, dairy products, palm oil and palm kernel oil.

Trans-fatty acids are formed as a result of 'hydrogenation', a food production process used to give liquid oils a better shelf life. Some have suggested a link between trans fats and weight gain regardless of caloric intake. Trans-fatty acids are found in many commercially packaged or commercially fried foods such as French fries from some fast food chains, microwaved popcorn, vegetable shortening and some margarines.

What can we do?

- Avoid trans-fats. Always read the labels of commercially packaged foods.
- Limit your consumption of high-fat foods, such as processed foods, fried foods, sweets and desserts.
- Eat a diet based predominantly on whole grains, vegetables and fruits.
- Choose cooking oils that are low in saturated fats and high in monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, such as olive oil and flax seed oil.
- Eat natural, organic wholefoods, and take the stairs not the lift!

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