



Know your Fats

Unhealthy saturated fats vs healthy unsaturated fats – can you spot the difference?

It's the Power of Un

According to Nuts for Life Consumer Research on Australian adults in 2008, many people are confused about dietary fats - what's healthy and what's *unhealthy*. While nearly three quarters of those surveyed (74 per cent) correctly *understand* that saturated fat is the *unhealthy* or 'bad' fat, most people are confused about the difference between the *unsaturated* fats – the *monounsaturated* and *polyunsaturated* fatsⁱ.

So, what is the difference? And how can *understanding* the fats in your diet help you to shed those post-Christmas kilos and ensure better overall health in 2009?

Each type of fat is never found solely on its own in food sources. All three are usually present but in different proportions.

Saturated fat
Mainly found in foods from animal origin e.g. meats and dairy. An exception includes products made from plant based coconut and palm oil. The liver in our body can make blood cholesterol from the saturated fat we eat in our diet. High blood cholesterol is linked with an increased risk of heart disease ⁱⁱ .

Polyunsaturated (Poly) fat	
Derived mainly from plants e.g. nuts, seeds (which can be processed into cooking oils and margarine), plus fish and seafood. Polys can be further classified as omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Polys are needed for cholesterol lowering and heart health ⁱⁱⁱ . Marine omega-3 fats are also needed for healthy brain function and for maintaining healthy joints.	Nuts high in <i>polyunsaturated</i> fat <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Walnuts• Hazelnuts• Pine nuts• Brazil nuts

Monounsaturated (Mono) fat	
Also mainly derived from plant-based foods e.g. nuts, avocados, olives, olive, canola and nut oils, and eggs. Monos regulate blood cholesterol levels but not to the extent that <i>polyunsaturated</i> fats can. They can however raise HDL cholesterol – the "good" kind that helps clear arteries. ^{iv}	Nuts high in <i>monounsaturated</i> fat <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Macadamias• Cashews• Almonds• Pistachios• Pecans

Chestnuts are different to other nuts – they are low in fat and more like a low glycemic index (GI) grain than a nut.

Are nuts a source of healthy or *unhealthy* fat?

While tree nuts contain between 49 – 76 percent fat, with the exception of chestnuts which contain 0.5 percent, this does not mean they are *unhealthy*.

- The majority of fat comes from “good” fats – poly and mono, which help lower blood cholesterol levels and are good for your heart.
- Nuts are packed with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants, but most importantly for weight watchers they are also a source of dietary fibre and protein - two factors that are known to prolong feelings of fullness, thus helping to lower food consumption.
- To help manage your weight, substitute foods like biscuits, cakes, pastries and fried snack foods with fruit and nuts. Eating a variety of nuts will help provide the right balance of healthy fats in your daily eating plan.

Nutrition research has shown that eating just a handful of nuts (30g) most days can reduce the risk of heart disease, improve blood circulation and lower the body’s blood cholesterol^v. In addition they help control hunger cravings. These delicious, crunchy foods are a great way to get healthy and stick to those New Year resolutions! Get the Power of Un!

For more information on the health benefits of nuts and nut recipes for all occasions please visit www.nutsforlife.com.au

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ⁱ Consumer Insights May 2008

ⁱⁱ Ibid

ⁱⁱⁱ Senior N, Cuskelly V, Eat to Beat Cholesterol, Australia 2007

^{iv} Ibid

^v Fraser GE, Sabate J, Beeson WL, Strahan TM. A possible protective effect of nut consumption on risk of coronary heart disease. The Adventist Health Study. Arch Intern Med 1992; 152(7):1416-24. Hu FB, Stampfer MJ, Manson JE, Rimm EB, Colditz GA, Rosner BA, et al. Frequent nut consumption and risk of coronary heart disease in women: prospective cohort study. BMJ 1998;317(7169):1341-5. Albert CM, Gaziano JM, Willett WC, Manson JE. Nut consumption and decreased risk of sudden cardiac death in the Physicians’ Health Study. Arch Intern Med 2002;162(12):1382-7. Kushi LH, Folsom AR, Prineas RJ, Mink PJ, Wu Y, Bostick RM. Dietary antioxidant vitamins and death from coronary heart disease in postmenopausal women. N Engl J Med 1996;334(18):1156-62.