

MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES

FOR SENIORS: WEEK 9

Don't fear fat

Fat often gets a bad rap, but it is an important nutrient we all need in our diets. A source of energy, fat is an essential part of every cell in your body, aiding in the absorption of certain vitamins and minerals. Fat helps to keep our brains healthy throughout our entire lifespan.



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When making healthy choices, the amount of food you eat is important, but it is also important to choose foods from a range of food groups that are full of nutrients. Many types of food are high in fat but also full of nutrients. Examples include avocados, nuts, seeds, and fatty fish such as salmon or mackerel. The types of fats found in these foods and in vegetable oils, such as olive oil and sunflower oil, are called “unsaturated” fats. These types of fats have been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease. Omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids are unsaturated fats that are also essential fats, meaning your body needs them but cannot make them on its own.

Trans fat

Most of the “trans fats” found in food occur when oils are turned into solids in an artificial process called “hydrogenation.” Trans fats are in many popular food products such as crackers, french fries, margarine and baked goods such as donuts, cake and cookies. Trans fats have been found to create inflammation in the body, which has been linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease. Avoid products that contain trans fats by checking the ingredients list and making sure that what you purchase does not list “partially hydrogenated oil” as an ingredient.

Michigan Fish

Michigan lakes offer a variety of fish for consumption. Fish contain unsaturated fats, which are needed by your body. Omega-3 unsaturated fatty acids may lower risk for heart disease, lower triglycerides, lower blood pressure and improve arthritis symptoms. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend eating 8 ounces per week of a variety of seafood. Some fish store chemicals that are unhealthy for people to eat. According to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, bluegill and other panfish generally contain the lowest levels of chemicals. For information specific to fish in your county, go to michigan.gov/eatsafefish or call 1-800-648-6942 to ask about the *Eat Safe Fish Guide*.

Saturated fat

Another type of fat that has been linked to chronic diseases is “saturated” fat. It is solid at room temperature and most often found in animal products. To avoid eating too much saturated fat, choose lean meats and lean cuts of meat as well as low-fat dairy options. Another easy way to avoid eating too much saturated fat is to make sure you eat a variety of foods from within each food group. Both the protein and dairy food groups contain options that contain little or no saturated fat.



WEEKLY RECIPE

Remember to wash your hands and prepare food safely.

Apple Tuna Salad



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1. Under cool running water, rinse **1 apple** and **1 stalk of celery**.
2. Dice apple and chop celery.
3. Open and drain **1 can (12 ounces) of tuna packed in water (or canned chicken)**.
4. Combine tuna (or chicken), apple, celery, **2 tablespoons of chopped nuts** (optional), and **2 tablespoons of low-fat mayo or plain yogurt** in a bowl.

5. Stir to combine. Serve over lettuce or on whole wheat bread.
6. Eat right away or refrigerate.

Note: Try a variety of apples for different flavors and levels of sweetness. Recipe adapted from "Apple Tuna Salad" by the University of Illinois Extension. <https://eat-move-save.extension.illinois.edu/eat/recipes/apple-tuna-salad>

Did you know?

The fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K are important for eye, bone and blood health.

MSU Extension programming

Michigan State University Extension helps people improve their lives by bringing the vast knowledge and resources of MSU directly to individuals, communities and businesses.

To help you be healthy at every stage of life, MSU Extension delivers affordable, relevant, evidence-based education to serve the needs of adults, youth and families in urban and rural communities. Programs focus on helping you gain the skills you need to buy and prepare nutritious, budget-friendly foods, increase your physical activity and stretch your food dollars.

MSU Extension's children and youth programs address needs and issues from birth through age 19, providing parents with educational resources related to your child's development

and giving youth the opportunity through 4-H programs to build leadership and teach practical life skills.

With a presence in every Michigan county, Extension faculty and staff members provide tools to live and work better. From a personal meeting to information online, MSU Extension educators work every day to provide the most current information when people need it to ensure success – in the workplace, at home and in the community.

For more information or to join a class, visit www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/. To find your local county office, visit www.canr.msu.edu/outreach/county.

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