

## MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES: WEEK 9

# Don't fear fat

**Fat often gets a bad rap but it is important to look beyond the name and focus on what fat actually is and why you need fat in your diet. An essential part of every cell in your body, fat is a source of energy, and it aids in the absorption of certain vitamins and minerals.**

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. There are many types of food that 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 the foods listed above 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 fatty acids 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. You can 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.

### Saturated fat

Another type of fat that has been linked to chronic diseases is “saturated” fat. Saturated fat is a type of fat that is solid at room temperature and most often found in animal products. To help 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 and your children are eating 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.



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### What does a recommended daily fat intake look like?

The recommendations for fat change depending on a person's age. This sample meal plan for boys and girls, aged 9, totals 2,000 calories, contains the recommended daily amount of fat (25% to 35% of total intake for children aged 4 to 18 years) and meets the average recommended servings for each food group. Less than 10 percent of the total intake is saturated fat, which also meets recommendations.

#### Breakfast

1 cup oatmeal made with water topped with ½ cup blueberries and ½ cup of 2% milk

#### Lunch

sandwich made with whole-wheat bread, 2 slices deli turkey, 1 slice cheese, 2 slices of tomato and ½ an avocado. Serve with 12 baby carrots, 1 small banana less than 6 inches long, 12 almonds and 1 cup of 2% milk.

#### Snack

1 large stalk of celery topped with 1 tablespoon peanut butter and ¼ cup raisins

#### Dinner

2 ounces boneless, skinless grilled chicken breast with 1 cup mixed vegetables sautéed with olive oil, 1 cup brown rice and ⅓ cup shredded cheese sprinkled over the chicken

#### Dessert

½ cup fresh or frozen blueberries



### Did you know?

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

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