



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

Accredited by the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care, Inc.
www.health.umd.edu

Nutrition Guidelines for Health

Sodium

The need for sodium varies with activity level, environment, and other factors. Some people need less than 1000 mg. per day, but 2400 mg. per day is considered a reasonable goal for the majority of healthy adults. Assuming three meals per day, the intake at any one meal should be approximately 800 mg. or less. If a high sodium food is used, other foods consumed at that meal, or during that day, should be low-sodium foods. To keep sodium intake down to 2400 mg., don't add salt in cooking or at the table. Also, minimize your use of *processed foods*, like canned soups that are high in sodium, and fast food.

Fiber

While there is no RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) for dietary fiber, the National Cancer Institute has recommended eating 25-35 grams a day to derive the benefits of dietary fiber. Some benefits include lowered blood cholesterol, improved management of diabetes and weight control. Nutrition labels now list the dietary fiber content of food products. As there are a number of different types of fiber, one needs to consume a *variety* of different *whole foods* that are rich in fiber.

The best sources of fiber include whole grains (100% whole wheat products, whole grain cereals, whole oats and oatmeal, corn, brown rice, etc.), legumes (beans, peas and lentils), fruits of many kinds (apples, pears, pineapple, berries, etc.) and vegetables (yellow-fleshed squashes, carrots, and many others, but especially broccoli).

Cholesterol

Cholesterol intake should be no more than 100 mg. for each 1000 calories consumed.

Because egg yolks contain over 200 mg. of cholesterol each, 3 or 4 egg yolks per week is suggested as a maximum intake of egg yolks. Liver and other internal organs are also high in cholesterol; they should not be eaten more than once a week, and servings should be only 3 to 4 ounces. Squid, shrimp, lobster and other shellfish also contain significant amounts of cholesterol and should not be eaten frequently; servings of these foods also should be limited to 3 or 4 ounces.

Cholesterol is created in the livers of animals, and is found in **animal products only**. No plant products contain cholesterol, but some have saturated fats and can cause our livers to produce too much cholesterol. Saturated fat can cause our blood cholesterol to rise even if we eat no cholesterol.

It is just as important to maintain a low intake of fat in general, and saturated fat in particular, as it is to keep our intake of cholesterol low.

Total Fat Intake

It is agreed that fat intake is the single greatest problem in the American diet. Our high intake of fats puts us at increased risk for heart diseases, cancer, obesity and diabetes. Both our over-all fat intake and the types of fats we eat are important.

Total fat intake should be less than 30% of our total calorie intake; some authorities feel that we should try to reduce fat intake to 20% of our calories. No more than 7-10% of our calories should come from saturated fats. Almost 10% of our calories should come from polyunsaturated fats. Approximately 10% of our calories should come from monounsaturated fats.

Using the nutrition facts label, you can calculate the percentage of the calories from fat in a

food by using the following formula. Divide the number of fat calories by the total calories per serving; multiply the answer by 100. This is the percentage of the calories in the food that comes from all fats. To determine the percentage of calories from saturated fat, use the following formula:

$$\frac{[(\text{grams of saturated fat} \times 9) / \text{calories}] \times 100}{=} = \% \text{ saturated fat calories}$$

Many food products advertise that they are "under 4% fat" or "97% fat-free" or similar claims. While these claims may be true, they refer to the **weight** of the fat content, not the calories. Fat contains **more than twice** as many calories, per weight, as proteins or carbohydrates. The amount of fat, by weight, in a product tells you little or nothing about what percentage of the calories come from fat. Always consult the nutrition facts panel.

It is not necessary that each and every food you eat contain less than 30% of its calories as fat. Foods with high fat content can be "balanced" by foods with low fat content in the course of a day. At the end of a day, no more than 30% of your calorie intake for the whole day should have come from fats.

- Over -

Published for the University of Maryland community.

This paper is made from 30% post consumer waste. Don't let the cycle stop here, please recycle this after you recover.

You can add up your calories for the day, add up all the grams of fat in all the foods you ate that day, and use a similar formula as above to calculate what percent of your whole day's calories came from fats.

$[(\text{grams of total fat} \times 9) / \text{Total calories}] \times 100 = \% \text{ calories from fat}$

The following table gives a rough idea of the number of grams of fat per day appropriate for various levels of calorie intake, but keep in mind that *less* is usually better than *more*!

If total calories per day equal:	Grams of fat that = 20% of calories	Grams of fat that = 30% of calories
1200	27 grams fat	44 grams fat
1400	31 grams fat	51 grams fat
1600	35 grams fat	59 grams fat
1800	40 grams fat	66 grams fat
2000	44 grams fat	73 grams fat
2200	49 grams fat	81 grams fat
2400	53 grams fat	88 grams fat
2600	58 grams fat	95 grams fat
2800	63 grams fat	97 grams fat

Saturated Fat Intake

Saturated fats in our foods cause our blood cholesterol levels to go up, which increases our risk for heart disease. Most Americans need to decrease their intake of saturated fats, which is found mainly in animal products. Foods that are very high in saturated fats include:

- meats (beef, poultry, lamb, etc.)
- dairy products (cream, butter, whole milk, most cheeses)
- coconut and palm products and chocolate

Polyunsaturated Fat Intake

Polyunsaturated fats can bring our blood cholesterol levels down, but the so-called “good” cholesterol comes down along with the so-called “bad” cholesterol. Foods that are high in polyunsaturated fats include:

- oil from corn, sunflower seeds and safflower seeds
- margarines made from them, if the first word after “Ingredients” is “liquid”.

Monounsaturated Fat Intake

Monounsaturated fats can cause our “bad” cholesterol levels to go down, which is what is desired, while leaving our “good” cholesterol alone. Most Americans need to increase the relative amount of monounsaturated fat in their diet. Foods that are high in monounsaturated fats include:

- olive oil (highest)
- peanut oil & peanuts
- canola or rapeseed oil
- avocados

When you are buying margarine, look for one that has more mono and polyunsaturated fats than saturated fat in it, the more the better.

Which is better: butter or margarine? The answer is not clear. But, without a doubt, **the best spread is no spread.**

(Based on reports from the National Academy of Sciences, American Heart Association, American Cancer Institute and the Surgeon General)