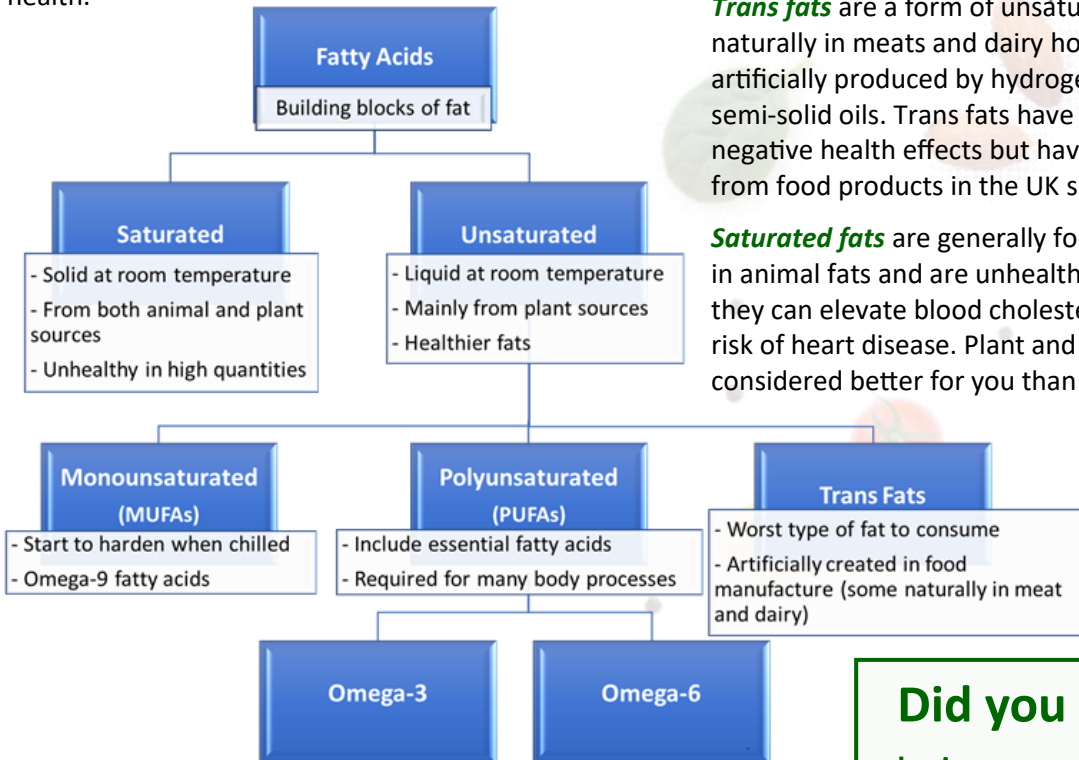




This fact sheet aims to provide information on different fats, their properties and how to consume less.

What are fats and why are they important?

Fats are important nutrients that supply energy (9 Kcal/g), are part of cell membranes, and can regulate many processes in the body; they are particularly important for the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K). Fats should form part of a balanced, healthy diet however, the amount and type of fats eaten is important to good health.



Trans fats are a form of unsaturated fat; some occur naturally in meats and dairy however, most are artificially produced by hydrogenation creating semi-solid oils. Trans fats have been associated with negative health effects but have mostly been removed from food products in the UK since 2012.

Saturated fats are generally found in higher amounts in animal fats and are unhealthy in high quantities; they can elevate blood cholesterol and increase the risk of heart disease. Plant and dairy sources are considered better for you than meat sources.

Did you know? . . . Our brains are a minimum of 60% fat!

Unsaturated fats are healthier fats found in higher amounts in plant sources; swapping saturated fats for unsaturated fats can help lower blood cholesterol. Monounsaturated fats are healthier than saturated fats and Omega-6 polyunsaturated fats (PUFAs) however, some PUFAs are essential, which means they cannot be synthesised in the body, but are required for many body processes. Omega-3 and Omega-6 fats can compete in our body and have opposing effects on several biological processes, including inflammation, blood fluidity and the elasticity of our blood vessels. A ratio of 4:1 (Omega-6:Omega-3) is normally recommended in the diet however, some research suggests the ratio should be lower (as low as 1:1). The ratio reported being consumed in Europe is generally too high (approximately 15:1), underlining the need to consume more Omega-3 and less Omega-6.

How much is too much?

Guidance for %energy is the same for all adults however, amount in grams will change due to decreasing energy requirements with age. For average adults aged 16-64:

Upper Limits	Male (average, 2500 Kcal/day)	Female (average, 2000 Kcal/day)
Total fat % energy	<35%	<35%
Total fat g/day	97	78
Saturated fat % energy	<11%	<11%
Saturated fat g/day	31	24

Risks associated with too much?

Too much *overall fat* is associated with weight gain, which increases risks of diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, joint problems, and some cancers. Too much *saturated fat* is associated with increased blood cholesterol, which increases the risk of heart diseases and stroke.

A high ratio of Omega-6:Omega-3 can increase the risk of several chronic diseases e.g. cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, rheumatoid arthritis, and Alzheimer's.

Sources in the diet

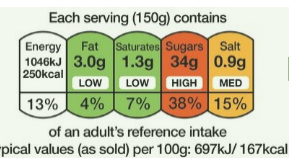
Saturated fats

- ◆ Animal fats
 - ◆ Fats on meat
 - ◆ Dairy sources e.g. butter, cream, cheese, yoghurt
- ◆ Plant sources e.g. coconut and palm oils. Coconut oil is 90% saturated fat and often portrayed as having positive health benefits however, these claims lack substantial evidence. Treat coconut oil like other saturated fats and limit in the diet.

Check labels

Many packaged foods have “traffic light” labels to help consumers identify the amount of energy, fat (total and saturated), sugars and salt (per 100g of product) in the food. If a “portion” is bigger than 100g for a food (or 150ml for a drink), there are additional criteria: if more than 30% of the recommended reference intake is in one portion, it will automatically be high/red.

Check before you buy! Remember to look at *all* highlighted nutrients; buying a product green for fat and saturated fat, but red for sugar and salt, may not be a healthy choice.



Fat Label	Total Fat per 100g of product	Advice
Green	0-3g	Healthier choice
Amber	3g-17.5g	OK to eat most of the time, but balance with rest of diet
Red	>17.5g	Eat only occasionally

Saturated Fat Label	Total Sat. Fat per 100g of product	Advice
Green	0-1.5g	Healthier choice
Amber	1.5g-5g	OK to eat most of the time, but balance with rest of diet
Red	>5g	Eat only occasionally

Tips

- ◆ Cook with oils that have a high smoking point e.g. olive oil, rapeseed oil, peanut oil, or walnut oil.
- ◆ Use pure oil sprays to reduce the amount of fat used.
- ◆ Low-fat products can mean compromising flavour; use less of full fat foods or mix with lower fat foods.

7 tsp
mayonnaise

240 Kcal
24g fat

1 tsp
mayonnaise
+ 6 tsp Quark

55 Kcal
4g fat

- ◆ Be wary of “fat free” or “low-fat” foods, many use sugars to make them more palatable – always check the label.

- ◆ Use poultry without skin.
- ◆ Use lean red meat with all visible fat removed.
- ◆ Use small amounts of strong cheeses or choose naturally lower fat cheeses e.g. cottage cheese and quark rather than artificially reduced fat cheeses.
- ◆ Use butter sparingly; try vegetable oil spreads.
- ◆ Use lower fat milks e.g. skimmed milk.
- ◆ Use low-fat natural yoghurt or quark rather than cream, crème fraiche or sour cream where possible.
- ◆ Grill, steam or bake food rather than frying.
- ◆ For snacks, replace crisps with unsalted nuts, fruit, oat cakes or vegetables with a healthy dip.

FoodSwitch UK

FoodSwitch UK is a free app which allows you to scan food and drink barcodes to immediately see whether they are **high**, **medium** or **low** in total fat, saturated fat, sugars and salt. FoodSwitch UK also looks for similar, but healthier, alternative products; this provides an easy means of making healthier food choices. [Find out more.](#)

See related Fact Sheets for more information, in particular on [Macronutrients](#), [Micronutrients](#), [Common age-related clinical conditions](#), [Tips for healthy eating](#), and, [Healthy eating and physical activity for healthy: Bones and muscles](#), [Heart](#), [Brain](#), [Immune system](#).

To see our detailed nutritional guide and example exercise programme, visit our [website](#)



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Ref: 18/20

2019-1-FR01-KA204-062101



**FOOD
GAMING**
FOR ACTIVE AGEING