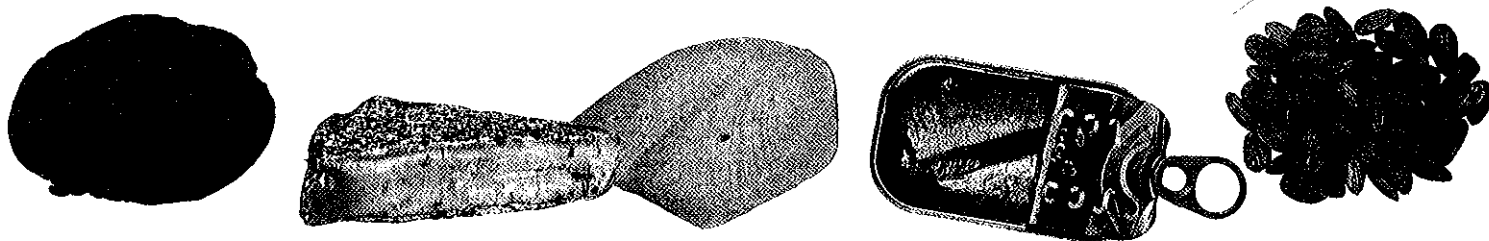




FACE THE FATS

Eating the right foods is one of the easiest and most important ways to keep your body healthy. For your body to be the best that it can be, you must eat a well balanced diet. This means a diet that includes the six types of nutrients your body needs. These are water, vitamins, minerals, carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. When you eat well, your body works better. A well balanced diet may contain many different types of food. It might even include some things that you think you're better off without!

Take fat, for example. What do you think of when you hear that a food has fat in it? You might think that the food is not good for you or that it is unhealthy. Yet your diet should have a certain amount of fat in it for your body to stay healthy.



THE IMPORTANCE OF FAT

One of the most important functions of fat is to store energy for the body. Most of this energy is stored in cells called *adipose cells*, also known as *fat cells*. Fats store energy very efficiently. They can store twice as much energy as an equal amount of proteins or carbohydrates.

Fats take longer to digest, so you feel full longer after you eat them. The body uses energy from fat for all its important functions. This energy can help power movement, digestion, and other activities. When energy is needed, fat cells release the stored fat into the bloodstream. Cells that need fuel take in the fat and break it down, releasing the stored energy.

Fats have other important functions, too. They carry vitamins and minerals throughout the body. Vitamins A, D, E, and K are all carried by fats. Fats also help nerve cells and other cells function properly. Layers of fat cells inside the body protect our vital organs and help insulate the body.

THE RIGHT AMOUNT OF FAT

Your body gets fats from the foods you eat. But how much fat is good for you? *Nutritionists*, people who study foods and diets, say that only a small amount of fat is necessary each day. However, small children need more fat. From infancy to age 2, children need fats to give their bodies the energy needed for quick growth. Fats are especially important for nerve and brain tissue growth.



Nuts contain unsaturated fats.

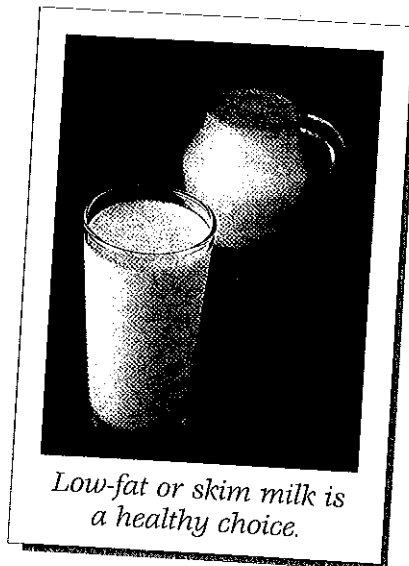
Most Americans don't have to worry about getting too little fat in their diets. Experts say that the average American eats between six and eight times too much fat in his or her daily diet. An excess amount of fat can be a bad thing. People who have too much fat in their diets can suffer from a variety of problems, including *obesity*. Obesity is the condition of having 20 percent or more body fat than is considered healthy. According to one study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control, one out of every three Americans weighs more than he or she should.

People who have too much fat in their diets may also have high levels of *cholesterol* in their blood. Cholesterol is a waxy substance that is found naturally in almost all human tissue. A certain amount of cholesterol is good for you. But too much cholesterol can build up in the blood vessels, slowing the flow of blood through the body. Cholesterol buildup can lead to such serious problems as heart attacks and strokes. Heart disease is the number one cause of death among adults in the United States.

How much fat is the right amount for you? The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that fats account for no more than 30 percent of a person's total daily *calories*. Calories are the units nutritionists use to measure the amounts of energy supplied by different foods. If you consume 2,400 calories a day, 800 or fewer should come from fat.

Fats have about twice as many calories per gram as other dietary nutrients such as carbohydrates or proteins. Each gram of fat has 9 calories. Each gram of protein or carbohydrate has 4 calories. Excess calories that the body does not need right away are stored as body fat. Fats are more responsible for obesity problems than sugars and starches are. Most nutritionists recommend reducing the amounts of all fats in the diet.

GOOD FAT, BAD FAT



Low-fat or skim milk is a healthy choice.

There are three important kinds of fats. They are *saturated*, *monounsaturated*, and *polyunsaturated*. Most foods have all three types of fats in different amounts. Some foods have more saturated fats. Others have more unsaturated fats.

High levels of saturated fats are found in red meat and in dairy products such as cheese and butter. They are usually solid at room temperature. Other foods that contain saturated fats include eggs, whole milk, ice cream, coconut and palm oil, and chocolate. Saturated fats are considered "bad" fats. They can increase the level of cholesterol in the blood. Most nutritionists recommend reducing the amount of saturated fats you consume. Of the 30 percent of total daily

calories from fat, the AHA recommends that only 10 percent come from saturated fats.

Saturated fats come chiefly from animal sources. High levels of unsaturated fats are found in fish, nuts, and vegetable oils. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are both liquids at room temperature. Monounsaturated fats can be found in such vegetable oils as olive, canola, and peanut oil. Experts believe that some monounsaturated fats may help the body stay healthy by actually reducing cholesterol levels in the blood.

Polyunsaturated fats do not contribute to cholesterol problems. Safflower, corn, cottonseed, sunflower, sesame, and soybean oil all contain this type of fat. Polyunsaturated fats supply the body with a special type of fat called *linoleic acid*. About 3 grams (0.1 ounces) of linoleic acid a day are essential to a good, healthy body. The human body cannot produce linoleic acid. Humans must get this important acid by eating polyunsaturated fats that occur naturally in plants.



Saturated Fats

Butter
Cheese
Chocolate
Cocoa butter
Coconut oil
Cream
Eggs
Hydrogenated shortening
Ice cream
Lard
Palm oil
Red meat
Whole milk

Unsaturated Fats

Canola oil
Corn oil
Cottonseed oil
Fish
Nuts
Olive oil
Peanut oil
Safflower oil
Soybean oil
Sunflower oil

FATTY FOODS

It's easy to tell that some foods have fats. Butter, oil, steak, and potato chips are all foods that you would expect to contain fat. But there are some foods with fats that might surprise you. Foods that contain hidden fats include peanut butter, doughnuts, nuts, cake, and milk.

Some foods have fats added to them to make them richer and more flavorful. Think of a baked potato without butter, a salad without dressing, or a ham sandwich without mayonnaise! Yet adding fats to our foods can have a high cost. Most of the fats the average American consumes each day are fats that have been added to foods.

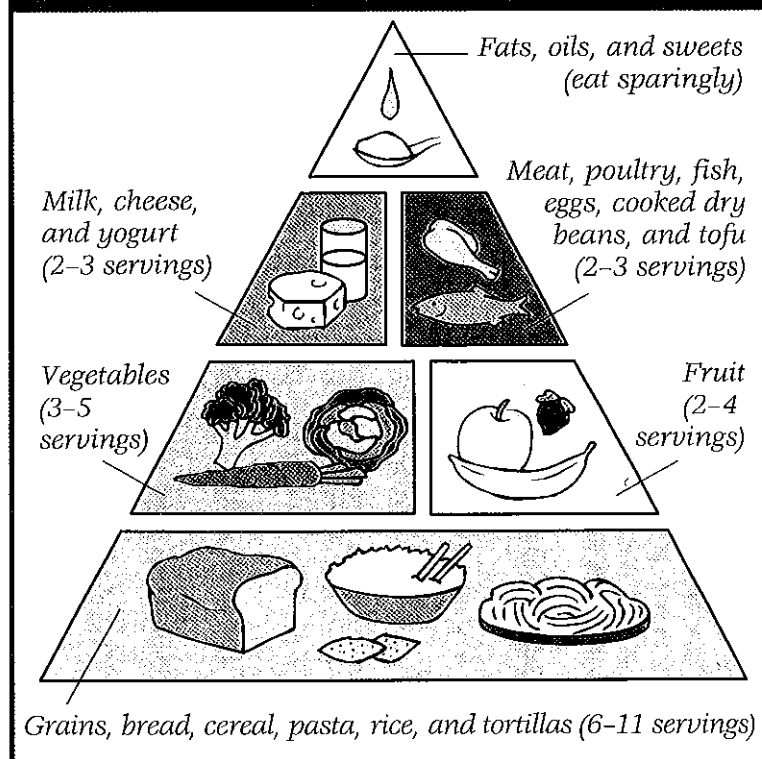
Want to cut down on your fat intake? Try foods with little or no fat, such as fruits, vegetables, fish, poultry, and lean meats. Popcorn is another healthy snack, but hold the butter! You can also cut down on fat by choosing grilled, baked, or steamed foods instead of fried foods. Drinking low-fat milk can help, too.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

- What are the six basic nutrients your body needs for growth and development?
- What are the important functions of fat in the body?
- What are some of the problems faced by people who have too much fat in their diets?

The Food Guide Pyramid

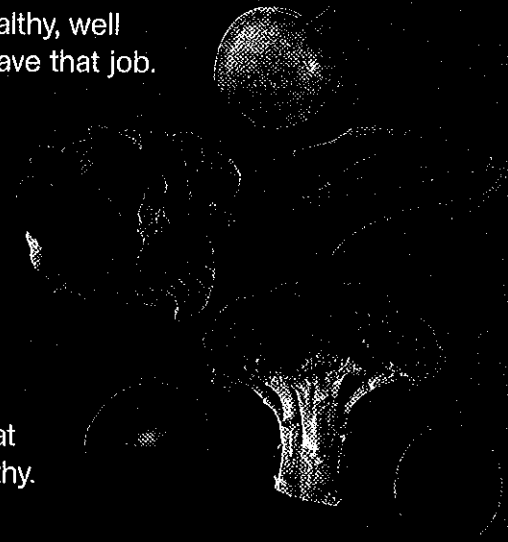
The Food Guide Pyramid teaches people which foods help them maintain a healthy, well-balanced daily diet. The Food Guide Pyramid separates food into six basic groups. It is best to eat more foods from the base of the pyramid.



A Healthy Career

Who decides exactly what a healthy, well balanced diet is? *Nutritionists* have that job.

Nutritionists are people who study how food and diets affect the human body. They can help people who have special dietary needs. People who have diabetes, cancer, and heart disease can benefit from talking to a nutritionist. The nutritionist can assist them in planning diets that will help keep their bodies healthy.



Your school probably has a nutritionist who makes sure school lunches are healthy *and* delicious. The nutritionist's job is to make sure you're getting meals that are well balanced, low in fat, and high in other nutrients. Your nutritionist knows that good eating habits start early!