



...because health matters!

# Nutrition Matters

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## Do You Have a Food Fat Phobia?

Are you spending a great deal of time in the grocery store reading labels? Are you avoiding certain foods because you think they contain too much fat?

### FAT - an essential nutrient!

Fat is an important part of a healthy diet.

- Fat is a part of every cell in your body.
- Fat is a valuable source of energy.
- Fat slows digestion so that you feel full for a longer period of time.
- Fat contains vitamins A, D, E, and K.
- Fat helps you to absorb vitamins A, D, E, and K as well as beta carotene.

### How much is enough?

In the long run, 30 per cent or less of your calories should, come from fat. This works out to about 90 grams (22 teaspoons) of fat per day for men and 65 grams (16 teaspoons) of fat per day for women. Remember, eating too little fat is just as unhealthy as eating too much! This is particularly true for children, who can enjoy nutritious foods that are higher in fat more often because of their increased energy needs for growth and development.

### As a matter of fat...

Certain fats called Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs) are vital for maintaining health and may prevent disease. EFAs can't be produced by our body, so we must get these through our diet. The Omega - 3 fatty acids are one example. They are found in fish, wheat germ and many vegetable oils.

### But what about chronic diseases?

Research has shown a link between high-fat diets and a higher incidence of heart disease, certain types of cancer and obesity. To reduce our risk of these diseases, we should focus on lowering our total fat intake by eating lower-fat foods more often, and by eating a variety of foods from each food group every day.



Remember that the goal is to reduce, not eliminate all fats. Choose your fats wisely.

**Different types of fat affect your health in different ways. Some types of fat raise your blood cholesterol levels, which increases your risk of developing heart disease. It is important to know the different types of fats in foods.**

*Blood Cholesterol:* a waxy type of fat produced by your body and found in your blood; if you eat too much fat, especially saturated fat, your body produces more cholesterol.

**Dietary Cholesterol:** a waxy type of fat found only in foods which come from an animal such as meat, fish, poultry and dairy products; cholesterol in food has little influence on the cholesterol in your blood.



**Saturated Fats:** the fat in meat, butter, milk products, and palm, palm kernel and coconut oils; these fats are solid at room temperature and raise blood cholesterol levels more than anything else in your diet.

**Monounsaturated Fats:** the fat in peanut, olive and canola oils; these fats are liquid at room temperature and also help to lower blood cholesterol levels.



**Polyunsaturated Fats:** the fat in sunflower, safflower, and corn oil; these fats are liquid at room temperature and can help lower the level of cholesterol in your blood. One type of polyunsaturated fat is called Omega-3 fats. They are found in fish, flax seed and Omega-3 enriched eggs. Omega-3 fats protect you from heart disease and help with brain development in infants.



**Hydrogenation:** a process which converts liquid oil into a semi-solid or solid products; this process produces trans fatty acids.

**Trans fatty acids (TFA's):** are produced by hydrogenation; trans fatty acids act like saturated fats in the body and raise blood cholesterol levels. TFA's are found in shortening, hydrogenated margarines, and foods such as muffins, cookies, and crackers made with hydrogenated fat.

### **Butter or margarine?**

What do these facts mean when you are buying or using a fat spread? Butter, stick margarine and 50:50 (a product made up of half butter and half stick margarine) are high in the fats which increase the cholesterol in your blood. Soft, tub margarine has lower levels of these fats, so it is a better choice than stick margarine.

The most important thing to remember is to reduce the amount of fat in your diet. Both butter and margarine are high in fat, so no matter what kind you are using, use less.

### **Sunflower, safflower or corn oil margarine?**

It doesn't really matter. Just pick a margarine where the first ingredient is a liquid vegetable oil, not a hydrogenated oil. For example, a margarine with the first ingredient as canola oil is better than if it is hydrogenated canola oil.

### **What about diet margarine?**

Diet margarine is just regular margarine with water added to it. It still has fat in it, so "diet" does not mean you can use as much as you want. Diet margarine works best on untoasted bread, buns, crackers, pasta or cooked vegetables. Diet margarine does not work well in baking, due to the extra water.

### **Is "cholesterol-free" margarine better?**

Cholesterol is only found in animal foods such as meat, fish, poultry and milk products. Since all margarine in Canada is made from vegetable oils, none of them have cholesterol, whether they say it on the label or not. Remember, "cholesterol-free" does not mean low-fat, so you still have to watch how much you use.



### **So what should I buy?**

No matter what fat spread you buy, use as little as possible. Brand names are not important. If you choose to use margarine, choose a soft tub margarine that has a liquid vegetable oil as the first ingredient and is non-hydrogenated.

### **Pass the cheesecake!**

Don't be fat-phobic! Healthy eating is not about dieting or avoiding certain foods. It is what we eat and drink over time that is important, not any one thing we eat on any given day. Eating more fruits, vegetables and whole grains while reducing total fat and being active will make us stronger and healthier!

For more information, contact the PCCHU Nutritionists at 743-1000 OR  
Check our Website -[www.pcchu.peterborough.on.ca](http://www.pcchu.peterborough.on.ca)

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