

## **February is Heart Health Month!!**

### **Love your heart...Focus on the Healthy Fats!**

We all need a certain amount of fat in our diets. Fats are essential to give your body energy and to support cell growth. They also help protect your organs and help keep your body warm. Fats also help our bodies absorb fat-soluble vitamins such as A, D, E and K. It is very important to choose the healthier unsaturated fats. Eating too much fat and the wrong kinds of fats (saturated and trans fats) may cause an imbalance in Good (HDL) and Bad (LDL) Cholesterol which can increase your risk of high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

#### **The Good**

##### **Monounsaturated fats**

These have been shown to improve blood cholesterol levels (lower LDL cholesterol and raise HDL Cholesterol). They are found in olive oil, canola oil, peanut oil, non-hydrogenated margarine, avocados and some nuts such as almonds, pistachios, cashews, pecans and hazelnuts.



##### **Polyunsaturated fats**

Omega-3 and omega-6 fats are polyunsaturated fats that are essential because our bodies cannot produce them, and as a result we must obtain them from our diet. These fats can lower bad cholesterol levels (LDL cholesterol). One type of polyunsaturated fat is omega-3, which can help prevent clotting of blood, reducing the risk of stroke and also helps lower triglycerides, a type of blood fat linked to heart disease. The best sources of omega-3 fat are cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel, tuna, rainbow trout, and herring. Other sources are canola and soybean oils, omega-3 eggs, flaxseed, walnuts, pecans and pine nuts. Health Canada recommends 0.5% of your total energy intake come from omega-3's (0.5 g omega-3's per 1000 Calories). This is likely 1.0 - 1.5 g omega-3's per day depending on your caloric intake.

Another type of polyunsaturated fat is omega-6. It helps lower LDL cholesterol, but in large amounts it is thought to also lower the good HDL cholesterol. In North America, we tend to eat a lot more Omega-6 rich foods. Eat these in moderation. It is found in cereal grains (wheat, corn, rice), safflower, sunflower and corn oils, non-hydrogenated margarine and nuts such as almonds, pecans, brazil nuts and sunflower seeds.

## **The Bad**

### **Saturated fat**

This can raise the bad LDL cholesterol. Foods high in saturated fat include fatty meats, full-fat dairy products, butter, hard margarines, lard, coconut oil, ghee (clarified butter) vegetable ghee, and palm oil.

## **The Ugly**

### **Trans fat**

I call it this one the “Double Wammy”. Like saturated fat, trans fat raises the bad LDL cholesterol, but it *also* lowers HDL cholesterol. Try to limit products that list partially hydrogenated oil or vegetable oil shortening in the ingredients. Trans fat is found in partially hydrogenated margarines, deep-fried foods from fast-food outlets (fries, doughnuts), and many packaged crackers, cookies and commercially baked products.



### **How much fat should you eat in a day?**

Remember that since all fats are calorie-dense, we need to use all fats in moderation. A healthy eating pattern includes between 20% to 35% of your calories from fat. For women, this works out to 45 to 75 grams of fat a day, and for men, 60 to 105 grams of fat a day. A tablespoon (15 mL) of oil, for example, equals about 14 grams.