

## COOKING WITH LESS FAT

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

We all need some fat in our diet to help provide energy, some essential fats that our bodies cannot make and to help us obtain and absorb the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E and K.

A healthy fat intake is based on your energy needs and activity levels. An average man requires around 2,500 calories (kcal) per day and an average woman 2,000 calories (kcal) per day. No more than 30% of these calories should come from fat. For most men that means not more than 95g of fat per day and for women no more than 70g of fat. It is also important to ensure that the majority of fat in your diet is from unsaturated sources such as vegetable oils, nuts, seeds and spreads based on olive oil or sunflower oil. It is especially important to reduce all sources of saturated fat.

	Men	Women
Average energy needs	2500	2000
Fat (no more than)	95g	70g
Saturated fat (no more than)	30g	20g

If you need to lose weight, you may need to reduce your fat intake further, since all sources of fat are a concentrated source of energy (calories). See our factsheet on losing weight.

The following are a few simple measures that can help to reduce fat intake when preparing foods:

**Cooking methods**

- It is best to steam, boil, poach, grill, bake, casserole, microwave or stir fry foods. Use these methods instead of frying. Add only small quantities of oil when cooking and choose healthier oils (such as olive and rapeseed) that are high in unsaturated fat.
- Try cooking using an oil-water spray. Fill a small plastic spray bottle with seven-eighths water and one-eighth oil of your choice. Use your oil-water spray when cooking under the grill, in a griddle pan, in a frying pan or in roasting pans before adding foods. These oil/water sprays are also available from supermarkets.
- Dishes containing minced meat and some traditional Asian dhals can be made without adding extra fat. Avoid adding extra fat to dishes after cooking.

**Meat**

- When grilling or roasting meat, use a trivet which allows the fat to drain away.
- Trim all visible fat/skin from meat before cooking.
- After roasting poultry or meat, chill the drippings in the fridge. Once cooled, the fat will rise to the top and harden allowing you to remove it.

**Dairy**

- Try substituting low fat yoghurt, fromage frais or crème fraiche in recipes that call for cream.
- Avoid using high fat cheeses. If you do occasionally use cheese in a recipe use small quantities of a stronger cheese or opt for a lower fat variety.
- Use semi-skimmed or skimmed milk instead of full cream milk.

**Starchy foods**

- Experiment with continental wholegrain breads. They are rich in flavour and do not need much spread.
- Avoid adding fat into the chapati dough or spreading fat onto cooked chapatis and naans.
- Oven chips are much lower in fat than traditional chips but only have them occasionally.

**Fruit and vegetables**

- Be aware that some vegetables will soak up more oil than other vegetables. Partially replace some of the oil that you would have used with small amounts of water when cooking these types of vegetables.
- Use vegetable purees to thicken sauces.
- Tinned tomatoes are versatile and make a good basis for many sauces and casseroles.

**Oils, spreads, sauces, dressings and snacks**

- If using oil, you may find it useful to measure it out using a teaspoon/tablespoon rather than just pouring it into the saucepan (use as little as possible).
- Although reduced fat spreads have less fat than butter or margarine, make sure you don't use twice as much.
- Try to avoid spreading fat on chapattis and do not add oil or ghee to the chapatti dough.
- Cut down on all deep fried snacks such as crisps, chevda, sev, samosas, puris, pakoras and chips - they are all high in fat and calories. Snacks such as samosas can be lightly brushed with oil and then baked or grilled rather than being deep-fried.
- Replace creamy salad dressings with those made from plain low-fat yoghurt or low calorie/low fat ones.
- Avoid recipes that call for a lot of fat or oil or use high fat ingredients e.g. Yorkshire puddings, pastry, creamy sauces.