

Fats and Your Health

Harmful Fats: Saturated fats can elevate the levels of 'bad' cholesterol (LDL) in your body. Typically solid at room temperature, these fats are mostly derived from animal products.

Common Sources: Look out for the fat on red meats like beef and pork, dairy products such as butter and cream, as well as lard. Even some delicious temptations like ice cream, and an array of baked and fried treats, are rich in saturated fats. Not to forget, coconut and palm oils are plant-based exceptions with high saturated fat content, yet they lack cholesterol.

Trans fats, on the other hand, are synthetic fats created by adding hydrogen to unsaturated vegetable oils, a process known as hydrogenation. This transformation from liquid to solid enhances the taste or texture of foods but comes with a health cost. Trans fats not only increase LDL cholesterol but also lower the 'good' cholesterol (HDL).

Typical Products to Monitor: Many store-bought or pre-packaged baked items such as donuts, cakes, muffins, pie crusts, pizza dough, and certain breads contain trans fats. Also, be wary of some types of margarine, vegetable shortening, and fried foods like French fries, chicken nuggets, and hard taco shells. Packaged snacks like chips, microwave popcorn, frozen meals, and certain cooking creams can be culprits too. However, products like Becel Margarine are formulated without trans fats.

Pro Tip: Vigilance is key. Always scrutinize food labels. Opting for fresh ingredients and home cooking can greatly reduce your intake of trans fats.

Beneficial Fats: Mono- and polyunsaturated fats are the healthier alternatives. The term 'unsaturated' pertains to their chemical structure, with 'mono' having a single unsaturation point and 'poly' having multiple.

Where to Find Them: These fats are generally liquid at room temperature and plant-based. Polyunsaturated fats, in particular, offer protective benefits for your heart and can aid in managing insulin resistance. However, they are prone to spoiling more quickly than their saturated counterparts.

Healthy Choices Include: Monounsaturated fats are present in oils ideal for cooking, like those derived from vegetables, olives, or canola, as well as in avocados, and various seeds. Polyunsaturated fats are abundant in nuts, seeds, fish, and leafy green vegetables, providing essential Omega-3 and Omega-6 fatty acids.

