



## Fat Intake and Childhood Health

Children, like adults, need to be fed a healthy, well balanced diet. Whilst a high fat diet can lead to overweight and other health problems mentioned above, a diet too low in fat can lead to problems with growth and development. Babies and toddlers up to the age of 5 need to receive 40% of their daily energy intake from fat. Children (5 – 14 years) need slightly less (35%). The best sources of fat for all Australians are mono and polyunsaturated.

### Fat plays the following roles:

Provides an energy source;	Can help to control physiological processes (eg. hormone production);
Acts as protection (padding) around vital organs;	Acts as a vehicle for fat soluble vitamins (vitamins D, A, E, and K);
Forms structural components of many tissues (eg. membranes);	Acts as insulation (keep us warm); and
Enhances palatability and texture of food.	

It is important to note that not all fats are the same in terms of their effects on the body. Three major types of fats will be discussed. These are:

1. saturated fats;
2. polyunsaturated fats **Error! Bookmark not defined.**; and
3. monounsaturated fats.

The absolute amount, as well as proportions of these fats in the diet can have a large impact on health and wellness.

<b>Saturated fats</b>	<b>Polyunsaturated Fats</b>	<b>Monounsaturated Fats</b>
Saturated fats originate from animal sources and are typically solid at room temperature. They increase LDL “bad” cholesterol levels thereby increasing the risk of coronary heart disease. It is best for everyone to limit intake of all saturated fats	Polyunsaturated fats are found in a variety of plant and animal-based foods. They tend to lower total cholesterol and triglyceride levels, but may also lower HDL (“good”) cholesterol. Omega three and omega six fatty acids are classified as essential fatty acids because they are required by the body to maintain good health.	Monounsaturated fats can assist to lower cholesterol levels without reducing HDL cholesterol levels as well. Studies have found that people who cook with olive oil have a reduced risk of heart disease, and the most well known group of people are those in Mediterranean countries. Olive oil is also rich in natural antioxidants, which may further reduce the risk of heart disease. Use monounsaturated fats in small amounts in place of saturated fats



<b>Sources of saturated fats</b>	<b>Sources of polyunsaturated fats</b>	<b>Sources of monounsaturated fat</b>
Fatty meat and chicken (especially skin) High fat processed meats and sausages Deep fried foods Full cream dairy products, milk, cream, butter and cheese Solid frying fats Cakes, biscuits, pastries, pies Chocolate	Vegetable oils Soy products Polyunsaturated margarine Nuts (walnuts, hazelnuts, brazil nuts) Seeds (pumpkin, safflower, sunflower, sesame) Fish and seafood (eg. salmon, tuna, sardines, mackerel and herring)	Monounsaturated margarine Olives and olive oil Canola oil, macadamia nut oil Avocado Nuts (peanuts, almonds, cashews) Peanut butter

***Tips to reduce fat intake in the diet for children over the age of two, needing to reduce their weight:***

- Trim all visible fat from meat, or preferably choose lean cuts of meat;
- Remove skin from chicken
- Consume fish / seafood 2-3 times per week
- Fill up on breads, cereals, legumes, fruits and vegetables
- Use small amounts of added fat (oil, margarine) – try spray oil and use a non-stick pan
- Use low fat cooking methods (eg. grilling, baking, dry frying)
- Limit take-away foods and fried foods
- Use low fat dairy products
- Snack wisely on lower fat options
- Learn to modify old “favourite” recipes