

WELLBEING

THE FAT FACTS

We are all eating too much of the wrong type of fats, but experts say that with a few simple switches you can turn your body into a well-oiled machine. We embark on a fat-finding mission

It's no wonder that many people are confused about eating fat. According to government guidelines, a maximum of 35 per cent of the energy we consume daily can come from fats. At up to around a third of our intake, that may sound like a generous proportion. The trouble is, not all fats are the same.

In fact, the guidelines currently say that no more than 11 per cent of our diet should come from saturated fat – and as a nation we are consistently consuming more than that. It's an issue that could have serious consequences for our future health, as eating saturated fats can increase the risk of heart disease as they raise levels of bad cholesterol and clog the arteries.

On the other hand, eating "good" fat – that is, polyunsaturated and mono-unsaturated fats – is essential for the development of our brain and eyes, plus the maintenance of healthy skin, energy and the body's defence against infection. Unsaturated fats also play a vital role in female fertility, and can actually lower levels of bad cholesterol in the blood.

GOOD VS BAD

To help us make healthier choices, experts are recommending that the UK guidelines for dietary fat intake undergo an overhaul. These guidelines have not been significantly updated since 1991, which leaves us lagging behind advice issued by countries including the US, as well as by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

According to The Fat Panel, an independent group of experts from the areas of public health, general practice, pharmacy and nutrition, a clearer distinction between "good" and "bad" fats is long overdue in the UK.

"The key focus of the recent WHO guidelines is the need for a reduction of saturated fat intake



and, most importantly, what should replace it," explains dietitian and Fat Panel member Dr Sarah Schenker. "Although this issue was included in the 1991 UK report, the wealth of data that has emerged since highlights the health benefits of not only reducing saturated fat in the diet, but also replacing it with polyunsaturated fat."

One study, for example, observed a 19 per cent reduction in risk of coronary heart disease when saturated fats were replaced by polyunsaturates.

In order to eat more healthily, you first need to know your fats. Those to cut back on are saturated fats, which are generally derived from animals and include full-fat dairy products and fatty meats. Even worse – and to be eliminated

altogether – are the high temperature resistant trans fats found in processed foods, now thankfully being phased out.

On the "good" side are polyunsaturated fats, present in oily fish and vegetable oils like sunflower and sesame. Mono-unsaturated fats, meanwhile, can be found in nuts, avocados and olive oil.

An easy way to replace saturated fats in your diet is to switch from butter or lard to cold-pressed oils like olive oil when baking, roasting or frying, and to eat more fish like salmon, tuna and mackerel rather than fatty meat.

Of course, all fats are high in calories, and if you are looking to cut back your daily total, these NHS tips can help:

- Swap cakes and biscuits for sweet treats like dried fruit and cereals.
- When shopping, compare nutrition labels so you can pick foods that are lower in fat. Use the "per serving" or "per 100g" information to compare foods. Servings may vary, so read the label carefully.
- Ask your butcher for lean cuts of meat, or compare labels on meat packaging.
- Choose lower-fat dairy products.
- Grill, bake, poach or steam food rather than frying or roasting, to avoid adding extra fat.
- Measure oil with a spoon rather than pouring it straight from the bottle to help you use less.
- Trim any visible fat and take skin off meat before cooking. Whatever meat you choose, use the grill instead of the frying pan.
- Put more vegetables or beans in casseroles, stews and curries, and a bit less meat. And skim any fat off the top before serving.
- For sandwiches, leave out the spread if you are using a moist filling. When you do use spread, go for a reduced-fat variety that is soft straight from the fridge, so it's easier to spread thinly.

HEALTH NOTES

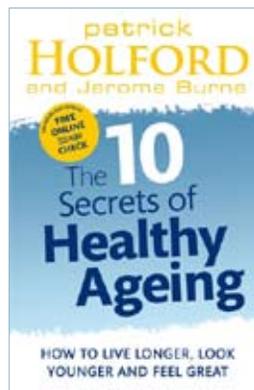


• Elle's belle

According to research for Nair® Brazilian Spa Clay, Elle Macpherson (left) is the model whose legs most women aspire to, ahead of runners-up Lisa Snowdon and Tyra Banks. In the survey, more than half of the women polled also said they would give up takeaways and chocolate for a month in exchange for perfect pins.



• **Jungle juice** For a seasonal detox try the natural supplement Onça. Along with guarana, grape seed extract and soluble collagen, it contains Camu camu, an Amazonian fruit with one of the highest levels of vitamin C in the world. The twice daily formulation claims to energise, detox and cleanse. Onça 30 Day Supply, £156, visit oncacompany.com.



• **Older and wiser?** If you want to look and feel younger for longer, then get hold of *The 10 Secrets of Healthy Ageing* by Patrick Holford and Jerome Burne (Piatkus, £14.99), which is full of advice on how to grow old healthily, and features a ten-step anti-ageing eating plan. To check your bioage online visit patrickholford.com/bioage.