



# SATURATED FATS

to reduce your risk of heart  
and circulatory diseases



## Saturated fats and heart and circulatory diseases

**Eating too much saturated fat is linked to high cholesterol which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.**

We all need some fat in our diet. Some fats are good for us, while other fats can lead to heart and circulatory diseases. Trans fats and saturated fats are the ones you need to cut back on.

Reducing the amount of saturated fat you eat is a very simple way to lower your cholesterol level and support your heart health.

**Good to know: No matter what your weight is, even if you're slim and feel fine, you can still have high cholesterol.**

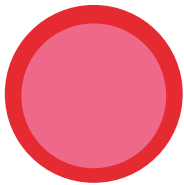
# Cholesterol and heart health

**If your cholesterol levels are too high, there are things you can do to lower it and reduce your risk of heart and circulatory diseases. One way is to change what you eat.**

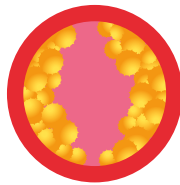
There are two different types of cholesterol; 'good' HDL cholesterol and 'bad' non-HDL cholesterol. Saturated fats and trans fats raise your 'bad' (non-HDL) cholesterol.

If you have too much bad cholesterol in your blood, it can build up inside the walls of your arteries (the blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood to your heart) making it harder for blood to flow through. This can cause a heart attack or stroke.

## Inside the artery



Blood inside the artery



Atheroma (fatty material) building up

# Know your fats

**Avoiding fats altogether is not the answer. To help reduce your cholesterol, cut down on foods high in saturated and trans fats, and replace them with monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats.**

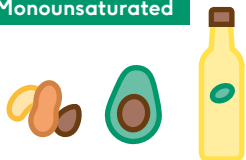
Omega 3 fats are a type of polyunsaturated fat found in oily fish like mackerel, trout and salmon. It's always better to get your omega 3 from food rather than supplements. Aim to have two portions of fish a week – one of which should be oily.

If you don't eat fish, then green vegetables, flaxseeds, rapeseed oil and walnuts are an alternative.

**Good to know: Trans fats have largely been removed from UK food. Average intakes are now below the recommended maximum.**

## Type of fats

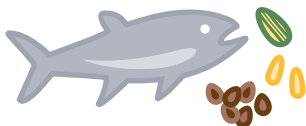
### Monounsaturated



## Found in

Avocados, olives, olive oil, rapeseed oil. Almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, pistachios and spreads made from these nuts.

### Polyunsaturated



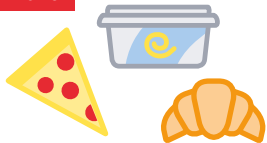
Oily fish, corn oil, sesame oil, soya oil, and spreads made from those oils. Flaxseed, pine nuts, sesame seeds, sunflower seeds, and walnuts.

### Saturated



Processed meats like sausages, ham and burgers. Fatty meat. Hard cheeses including cheddar. Whole milk, cream, butter, lard, ghee, suet, palm oil and coconut oil.

### Trans









Fried foods, takeaways, snacks like biscuits, cakes or pastries. Hard margarines.

# Saturated fats and meat

If you're trying to eat less saturated fats, avoid processed meats like sausages, burgers and kebabs.

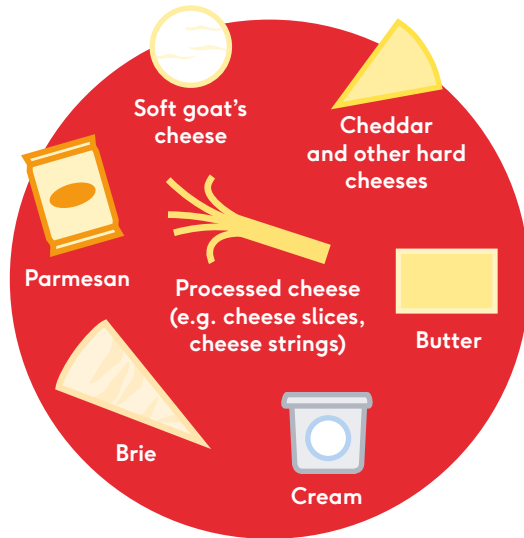
## What cuts of meat to avoid and choose

| Type           | Avoid   | Choose  |
|----------------|---|---|
| <b>Pork</b>    | Cooked pork belly joint with fat<br>     | Cooked lean pork leg joint<br>           |
| <b>Beef</b>    | Fried rump steak with fat<br>            | Grilled lean rump steak<br>              |
| <b>Poultry</b> | Fried chicken breast in breadcrumbs<br> | Grilled chicken breast without skin<br> |

# Dairy

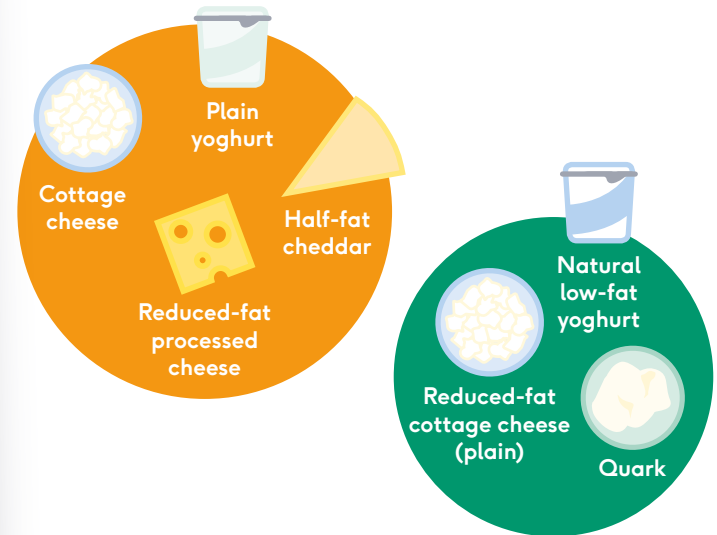
Dairy products like cheese, cream, butter and yoghurt can be high in saturated fat. There are ways to cut back while still enjoying some of your favourite foods.

**Cut down on these dairy products:**



You can cut back on saturated fat by choosing lower fat options. You can also try having a small portion (about 30g) of cheese, or grate cheese rather than slicing to use less.



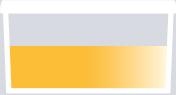
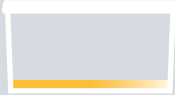
**Choose these instead:**



# Oils and spreads

Some oils contain more saturated fat than you think. For example, coconut oil contains more saturated fat than butter.

**Choose oils and spreads with lower saturated fat:**

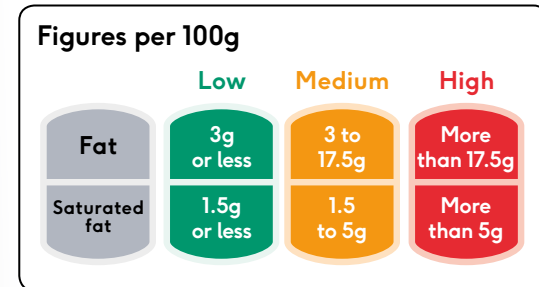
| Avoid   | Choose   |
|---|--|
|  <p><b>Coconut oil</b><br/>87% saturated fat</p> |  <p><b>Rapeseed oil</b><br/>7% saturated fat</p>      |
|  <p><b>Butter</b><br/>54% saturated fat</p>      |  <p><b>Olive oil spread</b><br/>14% saturated fat</p> |

# Look at labels

Reading food labels will help you keep track of how much saturated fat you're eating. Most packets have colour coded nutritional labels. If you're trying to eat less saturated fat, avoid foods with a red label for 'saturates' and try to eat mostly **ambers** and **greens**.

A food label will show the total fat in a portion ('fat') and how much of that fat is saturated ('saturates').

**How the label works**



Men should aim to have no more than 30g of saturated fat a day. Women should aim for no more than 20g.

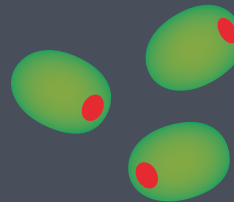
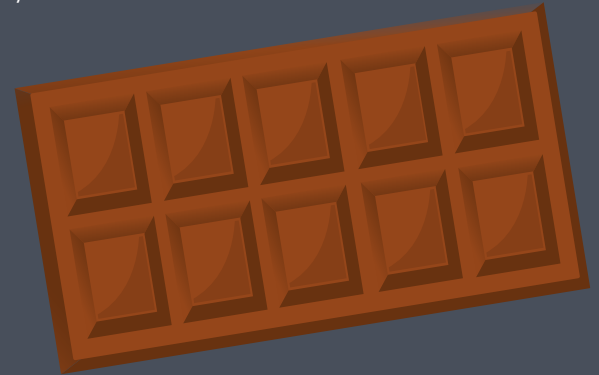
### What about reduced fat foods?

'Light' or 'reduced fat' means the food must be at least 30% lower in fat than the original. But they may not be as healthy as you think. Reduced fat foods often have sugar added in by the manufacturers.

Always read the packet and compare the labels of the original product and the reduced fat version. If the reduced fat version has a similar amount of calories to the original, it might be better to just have a smaller amount of the original.

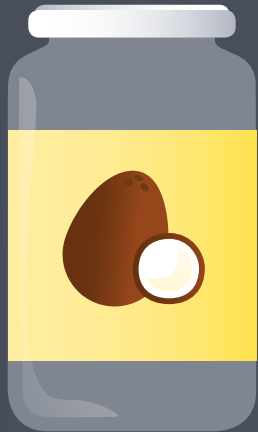
# Common myths debunked

**Chocolate:** Chocolate contains a type of saturated fat that doesn't seem to affect cholesterol levels. But that doesn't mean it's healthy. Most chocolate comes with added fat and sugar, so it should still only be an occasional treat.



**Olives:** Olives are high in unsaturated fats and have fewer calories than nuts. However, they're often high in salt so choose those that are unsalted or green for salt on food labels.

**Nuts:** Nuts are high in fat but they mostly contain unsaturated fats. As they're high in calories, only eat a small portion, that's a handful. Unsalted is the healthiest choice.



**Coconut oil:** Coconut oil has one-third more saturated fat than butter. There's not enough evidence to say that it's better for us than vegetable oils like olive or sunflower oils. It's fine to use it occasionally and use unsaturated oils as an everyday choice.

**"I STILL EAT THE SAME SORTS OF THINGS, I JUST LEARNT TO CUT DOWN ON THE SATURATED FATS. MY CHOLESTEROL IS DRIPPING."**

Shirley, age 53



# Simple swaps

- Swap butter to lower-fat butter or vegetable oil spreads such as sunflower, olive or rapeseed oil spreads.
- Switch from whole milk to 1% milk.
- Change sour cream to natural yogurt.
- Replace regular mince with leaner, reduced fat varieties.
- Swap red meat for fish, turkey or chicken without the skin, or plant-based proteins such as lentils.
- Switch your crisps with unsalted nuts.
- Change regular cheese to reduced fat cheese.
- Go from frying to grilling, boiling, steaming or baking.

**Remember, lots of small choices build up to big changes. Start now, and just stay focused on making heart-healthy decisions whenever you can.**

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Heart transplants. Clot busting drugs. Pacemakers. Breakthroughs born from visionary medical research. Research you fund with your donations.

Heart and circulatory diseases kill 1 in 4 people in the UK. They cause heartbreak on every street. But if research can invent machines to restart hearts, fix arteries in newborn babies, build tiny devices to correct heartbeats, and give someone a heart they weren't born with – imagine what's next.

We fund research into all heart and circulatory diseases and their risk factors. Heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, vascular dementia, diabetes and many more. All connected, all under our microscope. Our research is the promise of future prevention, cures and treatments.

The promise to protect the people we love. Our children. Our parents. Our brothers. Our sisters. Our grandparents. Our closest friends.

You and the British Heart Foundation. Together, we will beat heartbreak forever.

**Beat heartbreak forever.**

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