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Good Fat vs Bad Fat

When it comes to the topic of good fat vs bad fat, there are several things that must be considered.

First of all, fats are required for optimal function of the human body. Fat plays several essential roles in the body including:

- Provision of the essential fatty acids linoleic and linolenic acids which the body is incapable of producing. These fatty acids control inflammation, blood clotting, cholesterol levels and brain development.
- Provision of fat reserves for the body for survival during times when food is not available (eg. Infections that cause nausea making it impossible for us to eat). Of course, in these days most people have too much fat stored in their body.
- Fat stored in adipose tissue helps insulate the body against cold and heat and therefore helps maintain internal (core) temperature.
- Fat also supplies energy. Once carbohydrates have been burned off the body turns to fat for energy
- The oils required for healthy hair and skin are derived from fat.
- Fat soluble vitamins A, D, E and K require fat in order to be absorbed into the bloodstream.

What are fats? Fats are organic compounds consisting of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen. Fat belongs to a family of substances known as lipids, and come in solid or liquid form. All fats are combinations of saturated and unsaturated fatty acids.

Fat is one of the three main components of food, the other two are protein and carbohydrates. These three components supply energy for the body. Fat provides around 9 calories per gram which is more than double the amount of calories provided by protein and carbohydrates. This is why people desiring to lose weight should cut down on fat consumption.

There are several types of fat in food. Some are considered bad fats, while others are considered good fats. The types of fat are:

Saturated fat

Saturated fats are what are generally referred to as 'bad' fats. These fats are found in animal products like meat, dairy products. There are also a couple of vegetable sources of saturated fats which should be avoided or consumed prudently. These include

- Coconut (and coconut oil).
- Palm oil.
- Palm kernel (and palm kernel oil).

Fats and oil containing high amounts of saturated fats are generally solid at room temperature, regardless of whether they are derived from animal or vegetable sources.

Trans fat.

Another 'bad' fat is trans fat. Trans fat occurs during 'hydrogenation' which refers to the introduction of hydrogen to unsaturated fat molecules (eg. vegetable oils) in order to convert them into a solid. When this occurs, the molecules are effectively converted to saturated fats and begin to have the same effect upon the body as saturated fats.

High consumption of saturated and trans fats, which are frequently hidden in some foods, can cause weight gain and become obesity but more importantly, they can lead to cardiovascular disease, heart disease and stroke.

Unsaturated fat

Unsaturated fats are generally referred to as 'good' fats. This is because they are higher in essential nutrients and free of cholesterol which means they don't contribute to atherosclerosis (fatty plaque deposits in arteries which cause heart disease and stroke). There are several types of unsaturated fats including:

- Monounsaturated fat
- Polyunsaturated fat
- Cis fat

Although they are not, strictly speaking, fats... fatty acids are another crucially important nutrient, including the omega fatty acids

- Omega - 3
- Omega - 6 AND
- Omega - 9

As mentioned earlier, these fatty acids are responsible for controlling inflammation, blood clotting, cholesterol levels and brain development. Rich sources of these fatty acids include vegetable oils and fish like salmon and tuna.

Polyunsaturated fats and monounsaturated fats are good for us and can reduce the risk of heart attack, cardiovascular disease and stroke.

To practice healthy eating habits regarding good fat vs bad fat follow these tips:

1. Have a diet rich in fruit, vegetables, wholegrain, high fiber foods, and either low fat or fat free dairy products.
2. Maintain a total fat consumption of 25-30% of daily calorie consumption
3. Ensure that your primary fat sources are monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats such as fish, nuts, seeds and vegetable oils.
4. Use natural, unhydrogenated vegetable oils like canola, peanut, safflower, sunflower or olive oil.
5. Check nutrition labels on processed food for saturated and trans fat content (0% trans fat is best) and use soft margarine rather than butter or stick margarine.
6. Reduce consumption of foods that have high saturated fat content like french fries, doughnuts, cookies, crackers, muffins, pies and cakes.
7. Reduce consumption of saturated fat in general.
8. Reduce consumption of 'junk foods' like deep fried foods, baked goods made with shortening or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. This will help reduce consumption of saturated and trans fat.

Summarizing good fat vs bad fat.

Good fats refers to unsaturated fats and fatty acids which are derived from vegetables and fish. Bad fats refer to saturated and trans fats which are primarily derived from red meats and dairy products. In all cases, consumption of fat should be limited but bad fat should be limited more than good fat.

You can also find this article published on [Good Fat vs Bad Fat](#), and on the tag pages [Nutrition For Weight Loss](#).