

FUELING WITH FAT

WHAT IS FAT?

Dietary fat has a variety of roles in the body including providing insulation for organs and helping with the production of hormones. Essential fatty acids also serve as an energy source for the body and assist with the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K. Fat also helps with satiety and can help you feel more satisfied after a meal.

Like carbohydrates and protein, fat is an essential macronutrient in the diet. Fat yields 9 calories per gram, whereas carbohydrate and protein each provide 4 calories per gram.

Fat is classified as unsaturated ("good fat") or saturated ("bad fat"). The goal is to consume more of the unsaturated, "good", heart healthy fats the majority of the time and limit the saturated fats.

WHY DO YOU NEED FAT?

Fat is one of the body's main sources of fuel during low and moderate-intensity exercise and training. During aerobic exercise, stored fat in the body can be broken down and help provide energy for long bouts of activity. However, high intake of dietary fat before, during or after exercise is not recommended.

HOW MUCH FAT DO YOU NEED?

A general goal is to have 20-35% of your total calories come from fat. If you participate in lots of endurance exercise, you likely need closer to the lower end of this recommendation to allow for more carbohydrate in your eating plan. Strength-focused athletes might consume more of their calories from fat on a regular basis.

However, it is important to note that research suggests there is no performance benefit from taking in a diet with less than 20% of total calories coming from fat. Athletes who eat too little fat run the risk of not absorbing adequate amounts of fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K).

The quality of your fat intake is important! The recommendation is to consume 10% of your calories from monounsaturated fat, 10% from polyunsaturated fat (like omega-3 rich foods), 10% or less from saturated fat, and as little as possible from trans fat. Focus more on the "good" or heart healthy fats and minimize saturated fats.

Since fat provides more calories per gram than carbohydrates and protein, eating more fat can be an easy solution to increase caloric intake for athletes that need additional calories to help maintain or gain weight.

Foods Higher in Monounsaturated Fat	Foods Higher in Polyunsaturated Fat	Foods Higher in Saturated Fat
☐ Avocado ☐ Nut butters ☐ Nuts: - Cashews - Hazel nuts - Macadamia nuts - Almonds - Pistachios ☐ Oils: - Avocado - Canola - Olive - Peanut - Safflower ☐ Olives ☐ Seeds	☐ Fatty Fish: - Salmon - Trout - Tuna - Herring - Mackerel ☐ Oils: - Corn - Soybean - Sunflower ☐ Seeds ☐ Walnuts	☐ Baked goods ☐ Fried foods ☐ Oils: - Coconut - Palm - Palm kernel ☐ Animal Fats: - Butter - Chicken skin - Lard - Fat around pork chops, steaks, roasts - Whole fat dairy foods

HOW DO YOU SHAPE AN ATHLETE'S PLATE WITH FAT?

You should think of "garnishing" the plate with fat. While it may not take up an entire section of the plate, it can be included like a garnish would be at a restaurant. Here are a few ideas:

- Sprinkle nuts on your oatmeal at breakfast
- Dip your apple or banana in peanut butter as a snack
- Add avocado to your whole wheat wrap at lunch
- Dip your raw veggies and pita chips in hummus for an afternoon snack
- Serve salmon with veggies roasted in olive oil and rice for dinner