

Fat

Fat is an energy source that provides the essential fatty acid and carries fat soluble vitamins (vitamins A, D, E, and K) . In general, people eat a great deal more fat than is desirable for health or necessary for athletic performance. Americans typically consume foods that provide well over 35% of total calories from fat, and surveys of athletes indicate that their average fat intake is only slightly lower. Athletes should strive to have a fat intake that does not exceed 25% of total calories. To achieve this goal, it is important to know what foods are high in fat and to know some strategies that might make it easier to reduce fat intake. The good news is that, because fat is such a concentrated source of energy, reducing fat intake makes it possible for you to eat much more food!

Fats are a natural component of some foods, such as whole milk, meat, nuts, and cheese, and they are often added in food processing to make potato chips, other fried foods, and desserts. Many people don't realize that whole milk, even though it contains only 3.8% fat by volume, derives over 50% of its calories from fat. Even 2% milk, which is touted as a "low fat" product, derives over 32% of its calories from fat. Skim milk, on the other hand, contains all of the nutrients of whole milk but with NO fat. A simple strategy for reducing fat intake is to follow these three simple rules:

- 🍷 Consume little or no fried foods (the baked, broiled, or boiled equivalent is OK).
- 🍷 Stay away from prepared meats (bologna, salami, bacon, sausage, etc.). These are typically very high in fat.
- 🍷 Limit the consumption of visible fats (butter, margarine, fat surrounding steak, chicken skin, etc.)

Fats are metabolized during exercise, but it takes time and aerobic training to become an efficient fat "burner". In addition, excess dietary fat is very efficiently and easily converted to stored body fat. Therefore, a combination of frequent exercise and lower dietary fat are both needed to assure a good body fat level. The good news is you don't have to totally eliminate fat from your diet. Rather, take some simple steps to reduce the fat in your diet.

Some 'diets' suggest that increasing fat intake is good for athletic performance. In fact, all the good studies strongly suggest that higher carbohydrate intake and lower fat intake are important for optimizing athletic performance. So, don't be taken in by the fad diets. Eat a reasonably lower fat diet with plenty of carbohydrates to fuel activity.