



THE HEART  
AND STROKE  
FOUNDATION  
SOUTH AFRICA

## THE BIG FAT GUIDE

We know that fat is making a comeback, but more than just the amount of fat, it's the type of fats you eat that really matter. There are good fats that protect your heart and support overall health, and there are bad fats that increase cholesterol and your risk of diseases.

Dietary fats, found in foods produced from plants and animals, all contain 9 calories per gram, but don't get out your calculators just yet! Each type of fat can have very different effects on your health as well as your weight. It's not easy to determine precisely how much fat a person ingests daily so it's equally challenging trying to suggest how much fat you should take in. It's rare you would eat foods that are made entirely of fat or of protein. Most foods contain fat, protein and carbohydrates in varying proportions. The answer to keeping healthy isn't to cut out fat; it's to replace bad fats with the good fats that promote health and well-being. The key is to understand the difference. Fat fits into four major categories: monounsaturated fats, polyunsaturated fats, trans fats and saturated fats.

### THE GOOD

Unsaturated fats are the good guys and the ones you definitely want to include in your diet. These are the monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats and are found in sunflower oil, canola oil, olive oil, soft tub margarines, olives, avocados and nuts and seeds.

Polyunsaturated fats include omega-3 fatty acids which have many powerful health benefits for your body and brain. Since the human body can't produce omega-3s, these fats are referred to as essential fatty acids (EFA's) meaning that you have to get them from your diet. The best sources of EFA's are fatty fish such as sardines, salmon and tuna. The HSFSA recommends that you eat fatty fish at least 2 times a week.

## **THE BAD**

Trans fat is something you should definitely eliminate from your diet. Trans fats raise your bad cholesterol, lower your good cholesterol and increase your risk of heart disease and stroke. Even small amounts of trans fats can harm health - for every 2% of calories from trans fat consumed daily, the risk of heart disease rises by 23%.

You'll find trans fats in commercially-baked goods like biscuits, pies and cake mix, microwave popcorn, crackers and chips.

Several countries, including South Africa, have virtually stamped out trans fats by imposing limits on the amount that can be contained in packaged food. The World Health Organization (WHO) has called for the eradication of artificial trans fats from the global food supply by 2023.

## **FATTEN UP**

Adding a little tasty fat, such as soft tub margarine, to a plate of vegetables can also make it easier to eat healthy food and to improve the overall quality of your diet.

When it comes to fat, the golden rule is to steer clear from manufactured and industrially-processed food fats and take in more 'real' natural food fats that are good for your heart and your health.

Heart healthy meal from Cooking From The Heart Recipe Book 1



### Brown rice and tuna salad

Recipe from Noleen Narainsamy  
Serves 4 – 6

Instead of a rich mayonnaise dressing, try this rice salad with a homemade dressing.

1 cup (250 ml) uncooked brown rice  
½ tsp (2,5 ml) salt  
1 x 170 g tin tuna in brine, drained  
2 tomatoes, cut in wedges

½ cucumber, halved and sliced  
½ cup (125 ml) frozen whole kernel corn, rinsed  
1 carrot, chopped  
2 tbsp (30 ml) chopped fresh parsley  
1 tbsp (15 ml) chopped fresh mint or origanum

Dressing  
3 tbsp (45 ml) sunflower oil  
2 tbsp (30 ml) white grape vinegar  
black pepper to taste  
1 tbsp (15 ml) lemon juice

1. Place rice and salt in a pot and cover with water.
2. Bring to the boil and simmer for 40 minutes or until tender. Drain, rinse and allow to cool.
3. Dressing: Mix ingredients in a bowl until well blended.
4. Stir tuna, veggies and herbs into the rice with the dressing.
5. Serve as a light meal or lunch.

#### Tip

Replace tuna with left-over chicken.