

Nurses Notes on Nutrition

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We are now going to explore the Food Guide Pyramid small world of “**Oils!**”
Find out more on the website www.mypyramid.gov.

OILS, which are **fats** that are liquid at room temperature, believe it or not, are an essential part of the diet and food guide pyramid! This is because they contain “essential fatty acids” and are the major source of vitamin E in typical American diets. They do contain calories, about 120 per tablespoon, so they need to be limited to balance total caloric intake. The amount of oil a person needs depends on age, sex, and level of physical activity. (You can find a chart on oil daily allowances on the USDA, My Pyramid web site under oils.) An average is about 5 teaspoons. Most Americans consume this in the foods they eat such as: nuts, fish, cooking oil, and salad dressings.

Oils come from different plants and from fish. Common oils are: canola oil, cottonseed oil, corn oil, safflower oil, soybean oil, olive oil, and sunflower oil. Foods that are naturally high in oil are: olives, nuts, some fish, and avocados. Other foods that are mainly oil are mayonnaise, some salad dressings, and soft margarines with no trans fats.

Solid fats are fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter, stick margarine and shortening. They come from animal foods and can be made from vegetable oils by a process called hydrogenation. Solid fats contain more saturated and/or trans fats than oils. Saturated fats usually raise the “bad” (LDL) cholesterol in the blood, which increases the risk of heart disease. Try to lower your foods that contain saturated fats, trans fats and cholesterol.

Most of the fats you eat should be polyunsaturated (PUFA) or monounsaturated (MUFA) fats. Oils are your major source of PUFAs and MUFAs. The PUFAs and MUFAs in fish, nuts and vegetable oils do not raise the “bad” cholesterol (LDLs) in the blood. Oils and foods from plants do not contain cholesterol, like vegetable and nut oils. There are a couple plant oils that are high in saturated fats like coconut oil and palm kernel oil and are considered as solid fats.

We need fats as a source of energy, each gram of fat supplies 9 calories to the body. Fats are part of the cell structure; are used as stored energy; as an insulator to preserve body heat; they absorb shock; supply the essential fatty acids; and carry the fat soluble vitamins A,D, E, and K.

Oils/fats aren’t so bad, they’re just on a “slippery slope” that we need to keep balanced in our diet!!

(sources: www.mypyramid.gov; Fitness and Wellness, 6th Ed., W. Hoeger and S. Hoeger, 2005)