

Nutrition

FACT • SHEET

Meeting the Challenge of Weight Management with Reduced-Calorie Fats

Headlines, books, and TV over the past 10 years have persistently repeated claims that reducing fat in the diet can lead to better health and lower body weight. So now you can enter grocery stores and select from a greater variety of reduced-fat and fat-free foods. After a decade of lower-fat options, it's time to ask, "Are Americans healthier and slimmer?" Unfortunately, the answer is no.

While it's true that reducing the amount of fat you eat can reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, maintaining a healthy body weight is also important. And weight management depends on energy balance — consistently taking in no more calories than your body needs to fuel your daily activities. Many people have thought that just by cutting down on fat they would lose weight. Unfortunately, the low-fat message has been oversimplified. Lower-fat foods are not always lower in calories. Even more important, caloric intake and physical activity have been overlooked in all the excitement over new fat-free and reduced-fat foods. It's time to set the record straight.

Calories still count.

On food labels, the Nutrition Facts panel lists the number of calories per serving. The number of calories is determined by the amount of carbohydrate, protein, and fat. Carbohydrate and protein supply about 4 calories per gram, while fat has 9 calories per gram. So cutting down on fat may help to lower calorie intake if portion size and number of servings don't change. But you're not getting fewer calories if you choose reduced-fat or fat-free foods with as many calories per serving as the higher-fat version. And even though it's tempting, eating a double portion of a lower-fat food doubles the calories and may result in an overall higher calorie intake.

Taste is still #1.

The "fat-free craze" has disappointed consumers in another way. Fat has many unique properties that enhance the enjoyment of food. Fats deliver much of the flavor and help determine the texture of many foods. Eating meals with little or no fat just isn't as satisfying. As a result, many

people have given up on their low-fat eating habits and returned to the tastier high-fat foods they once enjoyed. Others struggle to minimize fat intake but admit to "splurging" on higher-fat foods more often than they should. It's clear that people don't maintain healthier eating habits for long if the food they are eating doesn't taste good. Making flavorful, low-fat eating a way of life is how you can realize the long-term benefits.

All fats are not created equal.

Is there any hope for the millions of Americans who want the health benefits of a low-fat eating plan? Fortunately the answer is yes. Today we have the food science and technology capable of producing fats with fewer calories. These reduced-calorie fats can be used in place of shortening and oils in many foods so manufacturers can make products that have the taste and texture consumers expect, but with fewer calories. Foods labeled with the dual claim of "less fat and fewer calories" offer consumers more options to meet their health and weight goals.

Here's how

Most snack foods and desserts are high in fat. But when snacks and desserts are made with the new reduced-calorie fats, you can include them as options without exceeding your fat and calorie budgets. Moderation in how much and how often you eat these foods is still the key. But there's no reason to feel "deprived if you don't" and "guilty if you do" eat your favorite treats once in a while. A registered dietitian can help plan a healthful eating pattern that includes your favorite foods. See the example below.

More variety with less fat, fewer calories.

The Food Guide Pyramid provides a guide to how many servings per day you need from

each of the food groups. An additional recommendation is to choose the lower-fat foods from each food group most often. Including reduced-fat and lower-calorie foods as options adds to the variety of food selections available. Choosing a wide variety of foods expands the range of tastes and textures, as well as nutrients.

Eating right is now easier.

Remember, no single ingredient or food item can ensure good health or reduce body weight. Over a lifetime, healthy eating habits along with regular physical activity and family health history are equally important factors in achieving these goals. But now food science has expanded the options of foods with less fat and fewer calories. And that's a claim worth making.

■ **The American Dietetic Association/National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics** For food and nutrition information and a referral to a registered dietitian in your area, call the Consumer Nutrition Hot Line at 800/366-1655. For customized answers to your nutrition questions, call 900/CALL-AN-RD (900/225-5267). The cost is \$1.95 for the first minute and \$.95 for each additional minute. Visit ADA on the World Wide Web at: <http://www.eatright.org>.

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	Serving	Cal/serving	Fat/serving size
Traditional chocolate chip cookie	1 ounce	146	8.5 grams
Chocolate chip cookie made with Salatrim*	1 ounce	109	3.9 grams
% reduction in modified cookies		25%	55%

*A reduced-calorie fat (5 calories per gram) used in place of shortening and cocoa butter.



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