

# The UCONN Buzz



## THE FACTS ABOUT FATS

For years fat has been viewed as a dirty word. We have switched our diets to include the “low-fat” and “non-fat” versions of our favorite foods. But has it made us healthier? In most cases, no. The reason is we need fat in our diet. Fats provide a source of energy, protection & insulation of organs, fats absorb certain vitamins, build cell membranes, and is essential for blood clotting & muscle movement.

The [U.S. Department of Agriculture's Dietary Guidelines](#) recommend that adults get 20%-35% of their calories from fats. At a minimum, we need at least 10% of our calories to come from fat. The problem is that the typical American diet is higher in fat: Roughly 34% to 40% of our calories come from fat.

**Let's examine these different fats further, starting with the bad.**

The worst fat for you to eat is called trans fat. Research has shown that even small amounts of artificial trans-fats can increase the risk for heart disease by increasing [LDL](#) “bad” [cholesterol](#) and decreasing HDL “good” [cholesterol](#).

**What is trans fat?**

There are two types of trans fat, naturally occurring and artificial. Naturally occurring trans fat can be found in certain meat and animal products. Artificial trans fat is a byproduct of a process called hydrogenation that is used to turn healthy oils into solids. This process makes healthy vegetable oils more like not-so-healthy saturated fats. On food label ingredient lists, this manufactured substance is typically listed as partially hydrogenated oil.

The [American Heart Association \(AHA\)](#) recommends limiting trans fat to less than 2 grams per day, this includes both artificial and natural trans fat. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend keeping trans fats consumption as low as possible.

**The not so bad fats –saturated.**

“The word saturated refers to the number of hydrogen atoms surrounding each carbon atom. The chain of carbon atoms holds as many hydrogen atoms as possible it's saturated with hydrogens,” says Alice Lichtenstein, the director of Tufts University's Cardiovascular Nutrition Laboratory in Boston.

A diet rich in saturated fats can drive up total cholesterol, and potentially increase the level of LDL cholesterol. This can lead to the formation of blockages in arteries in the heart and elsewhere. The AHA recommends aiming for a dietary pattern that achieves 5% to 6% of calories from saturated fat.

Common sources of naturally occurring saturated fat come from animal sources such as:

- red meat
- whole milk & other dairy foods and cheese
- coconut oil
- and many commercially prepared baked goods and other foods



**GOOD FATS**  
VS.

**BAD FATS**



**The good fats.**

The healthiest of the dietary fats are the unsaturated fats. Unsaturated fats include polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats. The AHA states that “when used as a replacement for trans-fat and eaten in moderation both mono- and polyunsaturated fats, can help lower cholesterol levels and reduce your risk of heart disease.”

Polyunsaturated fats, found mostly in plant/vegetable derived oils such as:

- canola
- safflower
- olive
- grapeseed
- peanut oils
- avocados
- soybeans
- seeds
- fatty fish

One type of polyunsaturated fat is omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3s are found in fatty fish (salmon, mackerel, tuna, herring) as well as flaxseed and walnuts. The fat from fish contains the most effective, “long-chain” type of omega-3s. The AHA recommends eating 2 servings of fatty fish each week.

Alice Lichtenstein published [a study](#) that found “Plant sources are a good substitute for saturated or trans fats, but they are not as effective as fatty fish in decreasing cardiovascular disease.” Do keep in mind that your twice-weekly fish should not be deep-fat fried notes Lichtenstein.

It is best to get your omega-3s from food, not supplements, Lichtenstein says: “Except for people with established heart disease, there is no data to suggest omega-3 supplements will decrease heart disease risk.”

The American Heart Association recommends that the majority of the fats that you eat should be monounsaturated or polyunsaturated. Substituting unsaturated fats for saturated fats & trans-fat can help lower both blood cholesterol levels and triglyceride.



## HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

[Bolton Public Ice Skating](#) - Bolton Ice Palace, times vary.

[UConn Public Ice Skating](#) - Mark Edward Freitas Ice Forum, times vary.

[7th Annual Take Your Child to the Library Day](#) - Saturday, February 3. Celebrations are taking place at your local library. Be sure to check your library's web page to see what time they are holding their events and activities.

[Cupid Made Me Do It](#) - Saturday, February 11th. This 2-mile "urban scramble" to kick off the Romantic Willimantic Chocolate Festival, First Baptist Church, Main St Willimantic.

[Tolland Eagle Freeze](#) - Saturday, February 24th at 12:00pm. Crandall Park Tolland. Come and jump in the icy waters of Crandall Park. Participants are asked to raise a minimum of \$25 to participate in the event.

[Free Radon Test Kits](#) available from the Eastern Highlands Health District. Winter is the best time to test the home for this naturally occurring

## [South of the Boarder Squash Soup](#) - From IL Child Care Bureau

### INGREDIENTS

- ◆ 1 onion
- ◆ 2 cans low-sodium chicken broth
- ◆ 1 small carrot, chopped
- ◆ 7 oz tomato puree
- ◆ 1 clove of garlic, chopped
- ◆ 2 Tablespoon chopped jalapeno peppers or green chilies
- ◆ ½ butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cubed
- ◆ Lime wedges for serving



### DIRECTIONS

In large stock pot, add onion, carrot and garlic and ¼ cup of water. Cook about 5 minutes stirring occasionally. Cook until vegetables are soft. Add butternut squash, chicken broth and tomato puree. Bring to a simmer and cook for 30 minutes. Mash squash pieces with potato masher or back of spoon; stir in jalapeno or green chilies until well blended. Season to taste with salt and pepper.



Sources: American Heart Association, US Dept. of Agriculture, Tufts University Cardiovascular Nutrition Laboratory, Harvard Health, WebMD, National Institutes of Health, American Dental Association

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## February is National Children's Dental Health Month

Now more than ever, kids are faced with a bewildering array of food choices. What children eat and when they eat it may affect not only their general health but also their oral health.

Americans are consuming foods and drinks high in sugar more often and in larger portions than ever before. Junk foods and drinks gradually have replaced nutritious beverages and foods for many people. The average teenage boy in the U.S. consumes 81 gallons of soft drinks each year.

A steady diet of sugary foods and drinks can ruin teeth, especially among those who snack throughout the day. When sugar is consumed over and over again in large amounts, the harmful effect on teeth can be dramatic. Sugar on teeth provides food for bacteria, which produce acid. The acid in turn can eat away the enamel on teeth.

Almost all foods have some type of sugar that cannot and should not be eliminated from our diets. Many of these foods contain important nutrients and add enjoyment to eating. But there is a risk for tooth decay from a diet high in sugars.

Here are some tips to help reduce your children's risk of tooth decay:

- Sugary foods and drinks should be consumed with meals. Saliva production increases during meals and helps neutralize acid production and rinse food particles from the mouth.
- If your kids chew gum, make it sugarless as it can increase saliva flow and help wash out food and decay-producing acid.
- Monitor beverage consumption, and choose water and milk more often than sugary beverages..

- Help your children develop good brushing and flossing habits.
- Schedule regular dental visits.
- Read labels and plan carefully for a balanced, nutritious diet for you and your kids.

This article was written by the American Dental Association.

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Phone: 860.429.3361 Email: [be\\_well@ehhd.org](mailto:be_well@ehhd.org)

