

# Fat: can't live without it!

by Louise Huneault

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**IF THERE'S** one thing that's been drummed into our heads, it's that fat is bad. So you may be surprised to learn that some fats are actually good for you! It's important to get to know the members of the fat family, so you start choosing the fats that will help your health rather than hurt it.



## THE FAT FAMILY

- **Saturated fats** (“bad fat”) are usually hard at room temperature. They include butter, stick margarine, shortening and the fat in meat and cheese.
- **Unsaturated fats** (“good fat”) can be monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats. They're liquid at room temperature and are found in safflower, sunflower, corn, soybean, canola, olive and peanut oils. Omega-3 fatty acids, a class of polyunsaturated fat, are found in fish, walnuts, canola oil, flaxseeds and soybean oil.
- **Trans fats** are liquid fats that have been processed to increase their shelf life. They're found in many margarines, vegetable shortenings, fast foods and commercially baked goods.
- **Triglycerides** are fats that circulate in the bloodstream and are stored in the body.
- **Cholesterol** is technically not a fat. Our bodies make it from the animal products we eat. There are 2 types: LDL cholesterol (“bad cholesterol”) and HDL cholesterol (“good cholesterol”).

High-fat diets have been linked to heart disease, cancer, diabetes and obesity. According to the Canadian Diabetes Association eating guide, no more than 30% of the total calories you eat per day should be coming from fat, and most of this should come from unsaturated fat. Eating unsaturated instead of saturated fats can keep cholesterol levels down and benefit the heart.

Omega-3 fatty acids have a protective effect against heart disease, so increasing these fats is a good idea. Reducing trans fats is a must since they increase LDL (bad cholesterol), decrease HDL (good cholesterol), and increase triglycerides — all risk factors for heart disease.


### Practical tips for decreasing bad fats

While it's important to know how different types of fat act on your body, it's equally important to know how to translate that information into everyday food choices. Here are a few general tips for keeping fat intake down to recommended levels while increasing the proportion of beneficial fats in your diet.

- Choose lean cuts of meat and skinless poultry;
- Eat one or more sources of omega-3 fatty acids every day;
- Choose low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese, yogurts and other dairy products;
- Avoid frying and other cooking methods where butter is added;
- Use canola or olive oil instead of butter when cooking and on the table;
- Choose soft, non-hydrogenated unsaturated margarines in a tub instead of butter or stick margarine;
- Avoid fast foods and prepare your own baked goods.

### Fruit purée instead of butter!

Commercially baked goods can be high in trans fats. Baking at home gives you more control over what ingredients you use. And there are tricks for cutting down on fat in baked goods. One way to decrease saturated fat in everyday baking (cookies, squares & muffins) is to substitute butter with an equal amount of prune purée. In most recipes, you can replace up to half the butter with prune purée without noticing a difference.

You can make your own prune purée or use baby food. To make your own, roughly dice a small package of prunes, place in a saucepan and cover with water. Bring to a simmer and cook until prunes have softened (about three to five minutes). Drain the prunes and purée in a food processor. Cool completely. Store in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. 



MAKES 32 COOKIES

- ½ cup prune purée
- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup brown sugar, packed
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ cup buttermilk
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- ½ cup whole-wheat flour
- 1 tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- ¼ tsp ground cardamom (or cinnamon)
- 4 cups rolled oats
- 1 cup dates, chopped (or dried raisins, currants, cranberries, blueberries)

## Crispy & chewy oatmeal cookies



Preheat the oven to 350° F. Prepare a cookie sheet with parchment paper.

In a mixer fitted with paddle attachment, cream butter, prune purée and both sugars until smooth and fluffy. Blend the eggs into mixture one at a time. Add vanilla and buttermilk and mix until smooth. In a separate bowl, whisk the flour, baking soda, baking powder, salt and cardamom until blended. Add rolled oats and whisk again. Finally, add the dry ingredients to the wet and mix well. Stir in dried fruit.

Drop spoonfuls of dough onto prepared cookie sheet. Flatten slightly with a fork and bake 12–15 minutes until edges are golden brown. Remove from the oven and let them cool on the cookie sheet for 3–5 minutes. Transfer cookies to a wire rack and cool completely.

**Approximately per cookie:**

Calories	124
Protein	2.7g
Fat (Saturated Fat)	3.9 g (2.1 g)
Carbohydrates	20.4 g
Fibre	1.9 g
Sodium	96 mg
Cholesterol	21 mg