

# Fat Facts: Snack Foods

Reading food labels helps us to make informed choices and to limit certain foods. Although selecting healthier snack foods can be challenging, it is possible. One of the keys to eating smart is understanding the relationship among calories, fat, and cholesterol. The chart below provides the information needed to make the best choice.

<b>FOOD</b>	<b>CALORIES</b>	<b>FAT</b> (grams)	<b>CHOLESTEROL</b> (milligrams)
Oatmeal Raisin Cookie	200	8	15
Peanut Butter Cups (2)	230	13	0
Fudge Brownie	270	13	15
Apple (medium)	80	0.5	0
Fruit Roll-Up	50	1	0
Pudding Cup	150	5	0
Popcorn (2 cups popped)	150	8	0
String Cheese (1 stick)	80	6	20
Trail Mix (1/2 cup)	350	22	0
Ice Cream Sandwich	160	6	10

## Snack Food Basics

Almost everyone snacks. Some snack foods can be unhealthy because they provide little nutritional value and lots of calories, fat, or cholesterol. However, snacks can be good for us if we make healthy choices. They can be a source of important nutrients and energy, and they can help prevent overeating on less nutritious foods. Limiting snacks with excess calories, fat, and cholesterol is a large part of making healthier snack food choices.

### Making Healthier Snack Food Choices

1. Don't use snacks as an excuse to choose foods high in fat and sugar. Instead, see them as an opportunity to get vitamins and minerals that you might have missed during your meals.
2. Choose snacks that are high in complex carbohydrates and fiber. They provide immediate and long-lasting energy.
3. Think about alternatives. For example, popcorn can be a healthy snack, but when it is buttered and popped in oil, it contains more fat and calories. On the other hand, unbuttered popcorn and air-popped popcorn can offer a great taste with fewer calories and much less fat.
4. Be creative, and select snacks from a variety of foods. Add peanut butter to celery, low-fat dip to fresh vegetables, or ricotta cheese and fresh fruit to rice cakes.

#### Choose:

- fresh fruits and vegetables
- low-fat cheese
- dry whole-grain cereal
- fat-free pudding
- pretzels
- baked chips
- low-fat yogurt

#### Limit:

- candy
- cookies
- snack cakes
- doughnuts
- fried chips
- sweetened fruit juices

# Fat Facts

## What Is Fat?

Fat is an essential nutrient and important source of energy for the body. However, the type of fat makes a difference to heart health. The total amount of fat consumed is also important. Fat is high in calories—it provides 9 calories per gram, compared with 4 calories per gram for carbohydrates or protein. As a result, a diet high in fat can lead to excessive body weight. It is recommended that 20–35% of your daily calories come from fat—with most fat coming from unsaturated fat sources.

- Fat supplies energy and essential fatty acids and is important for growth and development.
- A layer of fat beneath the skin helps to insulate the body from cold.
- Fat surrounds the different organs in the body to protect them from injury.
- Fat carries the fat-soluble vitamins A, D, E, and K and promotes their absorption in the intestines.
- Fat gives taste and consistency to foods and helps us to feel full so that we stop eating.

## Types of Fatty Acids

**Saturated fat** comes from animal products including meat, butter, cheese, and milk; it is also found in coconut and palm oil. Too much saturated fat can raise levels of LDL cholesterol, sometimes called “bad” cholesterol, which forms deposits on the walls of your arteries and may cause serious health problems. Limit your daily calories from saturated fat to 10%.

**Polyunsaturated fat** is found in corn, safflower, sunflower, and soybean oils, margarine, nuts, seeds, fish, and shellfish. **Monounsaturated fat** is found in olive, canola, and peanut oils, olives, and avocados. Both polyunsaturated fat and monounsaturated fat can help reduce total blood cholesterol if used in place of saturated fat. Unsaturated fats may also help to reduce your LDL cholesterol level.

**Trans fat** is often found in processed foods, especially french fries, doughnuts, vegetable shortening, stick margarine, chips, popcorn, cookies, crackers, and other foods that contain hydrogenated vegetable oils. Trans fat raises levels of LDL cholesterol and may even lower the amount of HDL cholesterol, sometimes called “good” cholesterol. Limit trans fat because of its negative impact on health.

## Cholesterol

Cholesterol serves important functions in the body. However, too much cholesterol in the diet can lead to an increase in the level of cholesterol in the blood. Excess cholesterol can build up on artery walls, causing a blockage that keeps blood from flowing. This blockage can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

### Display Tip

Instructors may find that their test tube presentations benefit from placing a solid piece of paper behind the test tubes for better viewing.

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