

## REDUCING THE SATURATED AND TRANS FATS IN YOUR DIET

The American Heart Association recommends that no more than 10% of the calories in your daily diet come from cholesterol-raising saturated and trans fats. The Food and Nutrition Board suggests that daily intake of saturated and trans fats be kept as low as possible. This behavior change plan focuses on reducing intake of foods rich in saturated and trans fats.

### Getting Ready for Change: A Cost-Benefit Analysis

Do you feel ready and committed to change your diet? Although your primary surface reason for developing and implementing a behavior change project may be to get a good grade in your wellness course, you're more likely to be successful both now and in the long term if you believe that the benefits of changing outweigh the costs. As an initial step in your program, complete an analysis of the benefits and costs of change for you using the [Behavior Change Cost-Benefit Analysis worksheet](#). Use your analysis to create a list of your major reasons for behavior change—and then post your list in a prominent location.

In your analysis, include the short-term and long-term costs of both your current behavior and your new behavior. For example, your current food choices may be convenient and familiar but may also increase your risk of developing heart disease or another chronic illness. Remember, your food choices affect wellness in terms of both the energy and nutrient content of the foods you consume and the other possible ways you might have “spent” your calories. For example, lowering your saturated and trans fat intake may also free up calories for healthy foods such as vegetables and fruits. In your analysis, also consider physical and emotional effects on yourself and others. For example, would a healthier diet support your self-image, personal values, or personal goals? Is health important to you, and is your current lifestyle supporting that value? Are your eating habits influencing others?

### Gather Data and Establish a Baseline

Once you are ready to make changes in your diet, begin by tracking your food consumption (foods, calories, saturated fat, trans fat) for one to two weeks. Keep a record of the foods you eat each day, and then determine which are high in saturated and trans fats. Use the [Pre-Program Fat Intake Log](#) or create your own journal or log page. At the same time that you track your food intake, investigate your options. For example, what other foods that you enjoy and that are in the “choose more often” category (see below) were available where you had lunch or dinner?

**Identifying Calorie and Saturated Fat Content:** Determining the calorie content and saturated fat content of foods is fairly straightforward. For packaged foods, this data is listed on the food label. For other foods, check the searchable USDA Food Composition Database (<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp>), which has nutrient information on thousands of foods. If you frequently eat at a specific fast-food or other chain restaurant, find out more about your typical menu choices and other available foods; it is likely that nutrition information is available at the restaurant from a booklet or poster or from the restaurant's Web site (see your text for specific Web addresses or do an Internet search).

**Identifying Trans Fat Content:** The FDA recently mandated that trans fat content be added to food labels, but manufacturers have until 2006 to comply with the new regulation. In the mean time, it is likely that some food labels will list trans fat content and others will not. To determine if a packaged food contains trans fat, check the ingredient list for hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils and vegetable shortening. If these items appear on the ingredient list, the product contains trans fats—although it may be difficult to tell how much. Leading sources of trans fats in the American diet are deep-fried fast foods (including french fries); baked and snack foods such as pot pies, cakes, cookies, pastries, doughnuts, and chips; and stick margarine.

The following table based on USDA data giving the general range of trans fat content in selected foods:

### Trans Fatty Acids in One Serving of Selected Foods

Food	Trans Fatty Acids (grams/serving)
Vegetable shortening	1.4–4.2
Margarine (stick)	1.8–3.5
Margarine (tub, regular)	0.4–1.6
Salad dressings (regular)	0.06–1.1
Vegetable oils	0.01–0.06
Pound cake	4.3
Doughnuts	0.3–3.8
Microwave popcorn (regular)	2.2
Chocolate chip cookies	1.2–2.7
Vanilla wafers	1.3
French fries (fast food)	0.7–6.0
Snack crackers	1.8–2.5
Snack chips	0–1.2
Chocolate candies	0.04–2.8
White bread	0.06–0.7
Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals	0.05–0.5

### Analyze Your Data

Evaluate your saturated and trans fat intake by examining your daily logs and determining your approximate total daily intake of saturated and trans fats. How close are you to the recommended 10% limit on total daily calories from saturated and trans fats? How many foods high in saturated and trans fats do you frequently consume?

### Set Goals

What would be a healthy and realistic goal for improvement? If you've found it fairly easy to track your saturated and trans fat intake in terms of grams and percent of total daily calories, then you can set a specific percentage goal. For example, if your current intake is about 14% of total daily calories, you might choose a goal of lowering it to the 10% recommended for some groups by the American Heart Association. This 10% limit corresponds to 18 grams of saturated and trans fat in a diet containing 1600 calories, 24 grams in a 2200-calorie diet, and 31 grams in a 2800-calorie diet. If you have high cholesterol, you may want to shoot for the 7% limit set by the National Cholesterol Education Program, which corresponds to 12 grams of saturated and trans fat in a diet containing 1600 calories, 17 grams in a 2200-calorie diet, and 22 grams in a 2800-calorie diet. (Saturated and trans fats are not essential nutrients, so reducing your intake to a very low level doesn't have an adverse effect on health as long as your overall diet is nutritionally complete.)

To calculate a daily goal based on a set percentage, use the following formula:

(1) Percent of calories from saturated and trans fat (expressed as a decimal) \_\_\_\_\_ X Total daily calories \_\_\_\_\_ = \_\_\_\_\_ Total daily calories from saturated and trans fat

(2) Total daily calories from saturated and trans fats (step 1) \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ 9 calories/gram = \_\_\_\_\_ Total daily goal for fat intake in grams

For example, if you consume about 1800 calories per day, you would calculate a 10% goal as follows:

- (1)  $0.10 \times 1800 = 180$  daily calories from saturated and trans fat
- (2)  $180 \div 9 = 20$  daily grams of saturated and trans fat

If you've found it difficult to track your intake precisely in terms of grams, you might want to set a goal in terms of number of servings of foods high in saturated and trans fats. For example, you might set a goal of reducing your daily servings of butter, whole milk, french fries, onion rings, and regular ground beef from six to four. Regardless of your overall goal, develop some intermediate goals for your program to help track your progress and give you more opportunities to reward yourself.

## **Develop Strategies and a Plan for Change**

Once you've set your goal, you need to develop strategies that will help you achieve that goal. You may need to make changes both in your food choices and in your environment or routine. Take a close look at your food record. Do you choose many foods high in saturated and trans fat? Do you limit your portion sizes of these foods to those recommended in the Food Guide Pyramid? Try making healthy substitutions. Do you have a salami and cheese sandwich with mayonnaise for lunch? Try turkey with mustard for a change. Do you always order french fries when you eat out? Try a plain baked potato or a different vegetable next time. Do you snack on pastries, cookies, doughnuts, chips, or fatty crackers? Try fresh fruits and vegetables instead. If you frequently eat in fast-food restaurants or other places where the majority of the menu is heavy in saturated and trans fats, try finding an appealing alternative—and recruit a friend or family member to join you.

When you do choose foods that are rich in saturated and trans fats, watch your portion sizes carefully. Choose cuts of meat that have the least amount of visible fat, and trim off what you see. And try to balance your choices throughout the day. For example, if your lunch includes a hamburger and fries, choose broiled fish or poultry or a vegetarian pasta dish for dinner. There are plenty of delicious choices that are low in saturated and trans fats. Plan your diet around a variety of whole grains, vegetables, legumes, and fruits, which are nearly always low in saturated and trans fats and high in nutrients.

The following lists of foods to choose more and less often can be a starting point for you to develop strategies for your personal behavior change program.

### ***Foods to Choose More Often (Lower in Saturated and Trans Fats):***

Breads, cereals, rice, and pasta: Most whole grains and simply prepared foods from this group are low in saturated, trans, and total fat; favor whole-grain breads and rolls, pasta, rice, baked tortillas, ready-to-eat cereal, air-popped popcorn, low-fat granola

Vegetables: Vegetables prepared with little fat (not fried) and liquid vegetable oils that have not been hydrogenated

Fruits: Raw and plainly prepared fruits

Milk, yogurt, and cheese: Fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, sour cream, yogurt

Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts: Legumes, nuts, seeds, ground turkey, veggie burgers, extra lean ground beef, round steak, sirloin, pork sirloin or tenderloin, boneless ham, veal chops and cutlets, leg of lamb, Canadian bacon, turkey ham, other low-fat lunch meats

Fats: Vegetable oils, trans fat-free tub or squeeze margarine, low-fat mayonnaise

Mixed dishes and sauces: Vegetarian or turkey chili, pasta with vegetables, grilled poultry and fish dishes, tomato- and other vegetable-based sauces, clam sauce, clear soups

### ***Foods to Choose Less Often (Higher in Saturated and Trans Fats):***

Breads, cereals, rice, and pasta: Biscuits, croissants, pastries, fried tortillas, full-fat (regular) granola, muffins, coffee cake, cakes, cookies, pastries, doughnuts, high-fat crackers, buttered popcorn

Vegetables: Deep-fried vegetables, french fries, onion rings, chips, palm and coconut oils

Fruits: Fruit pies

Milk, yogurt, and cheese: Full-fat (whole) milk, regular cheese, mayonnaise, sour cream

Meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts: Ground beef, meatloaf, ribs, T-bone or flank steak, prime grades of beef, pork chops, pork roast or ribs, bone-end ham, lamb chops or ribs, poultry with skin, fried chicken or fish

Fats: Butter, stick margarine, hydrogenated vegetable oils, vegetable shortening, coconut and palm oils

Mixed dishes and sauces: Pizza, pot pies, macaroni and cheese, fried and high-fat convenience foods, cream-based sauces and soups

Refer to the Wellness Links on the Online Learning Center for your text for additional information and strategies.

As a final planning step, develop some rewards for your program—for achieving intermediate and final goals as well as for just sticking with your program. Make a list of your activities and favorite events to use as rewards. They should be special, inexpensive, and preferably unrelated to food or alcohol. You might treat yourself to a concert, a ball game, a new CD, a long-distance phone call to a friend, a day off from studying for a hike in the woods—whatever is meaningful to you. List your rewards on your behavior change contract.

### **Complete a Contract**

The last step before you put your program into action is to make a formal commitment by completing a contract. Your contract should include the following elements:

- Your name
- A statement of your goal, including your current status and target status
- A start date—choose a date in the near future
- A target completion date
- A system of mini-goals and rewards
- Your list of key strategies; you may also want to include your list of foods to “choose more often” and “choose less often”
- A description of the involvement of others—if you plan to have friends or family members involved in your program, describe what they will do
- A place for your signature and, if possible, the signature of a witness—having someone else witness your contract can help make you more likely to stick with your program

Use the [Behavior Change Contract](#) provided, or develop your own contract.

### **Monitor Your Program**

Once your plan is complete, take action. Keep track of your progress by continuing to monitor and evaluate your consumption of saturated and trans fats. Use the [Fat Intake Program Log](#) or devise your own form.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Behavior Change Cost-Benefit Analysis**

**Current (target) behavior:** \_\_\_\_\_

**New behavior:** \_\_\_\_\_

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*Short-term benefits of current behavior:*

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*Short-term costs of current behavior:*

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*Long-term benefits of current behavior:*

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*Long-term costs of current behavior:*

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*Short-term benefits of new behavior:*

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*Short-term costs of new behavior:*

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*Long-term benefits of new behavior:*

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*Long-term costs of new behavior:*

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**Key reasons for behavior change:** Review your analysis and identify your most important reasons for changing your behavior; post your list of key reasons in a prominent location.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Pre-Program Fat Intake Log

Record the foods you consume during a 24-hour period. List the time, food, portion size, and key external and internal influences on your choice (for example, degree of hunger or thirst, your environment, your emotional state, and the people around you). Fill in the information about calorie, saturated fat, and trans fat content; obtain this information from food labels and other resources. If you know a food has trans fat but cannot determine the precise amount, put a check mark in the trans column. At the end of the day, total your saturated and trans fat intake and calculate percent of total daily calories as saturated and trans fat. Finally, gather resource information for your behavior change program by recording food alternatives available to you over the course of the day.

Time	Food	Portion	Influences	Calories	Saturated fat (g)	Trans fat (g)

**Approximate total saturated and trans fat intake: \_\_\_\_\_ grams    Total day's calorie intake: \_\_\_\_\_ calories**

Total saturated and trans fat intake: \_\_\_\_\_ grams  $\times$  9 calories/gram = \_\_\_\_\_ Total daily saturated and trans fat calories

Total daily saturated and trans fat calories: \_\_\_\_\_ calories  $\div$  Total day's calories: \_\_\_\_\_ calories

= \_\_\_\_\_ % **Percent daily calories as saturated and trans fat**

**OR Total daily servings of foods high in saturated and trans fat: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Resources (food alternatives easily accessible over the course of the day):**

*(over)*

Time	Food	Portion	Influences	Calories	Saturated fat (g)	Trans fat (g)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Behavior Change Contract

(1) I \_\_\_\_\_ agree to \_\_\_\_\_  
(name) (specify behavior you want to change; include current status)

\_\_\_\_\_

(2) I will begin on \_\_\_\_\_ and plan to reach my goal of \_\_\_\_\_  
(start date) (specify final goal)

\_\_\_\_\_

by \_\_\_\_\_ .  
(final target date)

(3) In order to reach my final goal, I have devised the following schedule of mini-goals. For each step in my program, I will give myself the reward listed.

_____ (mini-goal 1)	_____ (target date)	_____ (reward)
_____ (mini-goal 2)	_____ (target date)	_____ (reward)
_____ (mini-goal 3)	_____ (target date)	_____ (reward)
_____ (mini-goal 4)	_____ (target date)	_____ (reward)
_____ (mini-goal 5)	_____ (target date)	_____ (reward)

My overall reward for reaching my final goal will be \_\_\_\_\_

(4) I have gathered and analyzed data on my target behavior and have identified the following strategies for changing my behavior:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(5) I will use the following tools to monitor my progress toward reaching my final goal:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(list any charts, graphs, or logs you plan to use)

(6) I have recruited a helper who will witness my contract and \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(list any way in which your helper will participate in your program)

*(continued on following page)*

**I sign this contract as an indication of my personal commitment to reach my goal.**

\_\_\_\_\_

(your signature)

(date)

\_\_\_\_\_

(witness's signature)

(date)

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT BEHAVIOR CHANGE PROGRAM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Fat Intake Program Log

Record the foods you consume during a 24-hour period. List the time, food, portion size, and key external and internal influences on your choice (for example, degree of hunger or thirst, your environment, your emotional state, and the people around you). Fill in the information about calorie, saturated fat, and trans fat content; obtain this information from food labels and other resources. If you know a food has trans fat but cannot determine the precise amount, put a check mark in the trans column. At the end of the day, total your saturated and trans fat intake and calculate percent of total daily calories as saturated and trans fat. Finally, keep notes about the behavior change strategies you use successfully over the course of the day.

Time	Food	Portion	Influences	Calories	Saturated fat (g)	Trans fat (g)

**Approximate total saturated and trans fat intake: \_\_\_\_\_ grams    Total day's calorie intake: \_\_\_\_\_ calories**

Total saturated and trans fat intake: \_\_\_\_\_ grams  $\times$  9 calories/gram = \_\_\_\_\_ Total daily saturated and trans fat calories

Total daily saturated and trans fat calories: \_\_\_\_\_ calories  $\div$  Total day's calories: \_\_\_\_\_ calories

= \_\_\_\_\_ % **Percent daily calories as saturated and trans fat**

**OR Total daily servings of foods high in saturated and trans fat: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Behavior change strategies in use:**

*(over)*

Time	Food	Portion	Influences	Calories	Saturated fat (g)	Trans fat (g)